

PERSONAL COLUMN

It has always been a bit of a puzzle that Polonius, easily the most sensible person to appear in *Hamlet*, is so often made to appear such a doddler. Take that advice to Laertes, for example: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be: for loan oft loses both itself and friend; and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry." At a pinch, one could base a whole country's public sector financial policy on those final words.

And so I was sorry to see Ophelia, in a recent revival of Olivier's film version of the play, giggling and fooling about behind Laertes' back and not paying proper attention to the good old man.

Anyway, with Polonius in mind, here are a few precepts to be getting on with. Perpend: "If a problem is too difficult, start by devising a simple version of it and learn to solve that."

Anyone who has tried it knows that improving standards of English is not easy. So why not take something straightforward, like high-jumping, and work out how to improve national standards in that?

One could start by lining up a representative sample of people and then asking each to leap over as high a barrier as he or she could manage. It would then be a question of adding up the widely-varying heights they achieved and dividing through by the number of survivors. Behold the norm.

The next step would be to convince oneself that the nation's future depended on raising the average standard achieved in this



PETER NEWSAM

Bridge building

'Thank heaven you turned up,' the head declared. 'That so-and-so vicar has found it'

way. A duly-appointed minister for the high jump would be given responsibility for accomplishing this.

It is at this point that error could creep in. It would be unwise for the minister to argue that improvement could be measured by ensuring that, say, 60 per cent of jumpers reach that initial standard rather than 50 per cent, or that 50 per cent could be induced to reach a rather higher standard. Why unwise? Because anyone held accountable for securing this "improvement" would have good reason to ignore both the people who could already jump higher than the required level (the high-fliers) and also those who could hardly propel themselves over half that height, even before lunch.

So the standard of high-jumping might go up, in the sense that more people would reach it or the same number of people would reach something better but standards—if the achievement of each individual were the test—would almost certainly not.

Other ways of raising high-jumping standards suggest themselves where the art of the teacher rather than the skill of an

teaching of English... but this is getting far too difficult, so let me hurry on.

Perpend again: "Avoid adding what you cannot conveniently subtract later."

You recall those special priority area

allowances? It seemed such a good idea at the time: extra money for teachers soldiering on in difficult places. But areas go up as well as down, and the teachers in the bits that had been down—which someone else later said had gone up—did not suddenly feel underserved when the time came to remove their extra money. They just felt robbed.

So it will prove when paying more to "good" teachers. That is easily done to start with; but some good teachers are like Camembert: they tend to go off with the passing years. There could be no better way to hasten that process than to remove their "good teacher" allowance at the very moment when their self-esteem, always closely related to performance, needed boosting.

And that brings me to a seasonal precept—one that the ghost of old Polonius whispered in my ear some 20 years ago.

It was the last day of the Christmas term and I was making an unannounced visit to a residential special school. The snow lay deep and crisp and even. My instructions were clear: I was to deliver a rebuke to the head because, in defiance of all administrative dogma, he had acquired a bidge from local industrialists and had marked it on an island in a lake in the school grounds. Shocking.

With a well-rehearsed rocket to deliver, I drove up to the school's front entrance. As I

did so, he emerged and nearly pulled my arm out of its socket as he dragged me in by the side door. "Thank heaven you turned up," the head declared, casting his eyes upwards. "That so-and-so vicar has defaulted."

And thus it was that, a few minutes later, I found myself bumping down the long drive to the school on an unsprung horse-drawn cart, cloaked in red with a bulging sack at my side, peering through an outside cotton-wool beard at the falling snow, and musing the while on the ups and downs of administrative life.

At the school's front door I dismounted to the sound of children cheering. The next hour was a riotous mixture of balloons, laughter, parcel-opening, a few tears, cake, and, finally, an empty sack and three cheers for Santa. Thereafter, the head and I retreated to his study.

"And what," he enquired as he helped me detach myself from the beard, "caused you to call so providentially?"

It was hopeless, of course, and none of you would have done much better.

"Just passing by," I murmured, wondering what I was going to say back at the office, "and naturally I wanted to wish you and the children a Happy Christmas."

Naturally. But what was it that the ghost of old Polonius whispered in my ear as I drove back over the moors? "Only a few attempts just before Christmas a nation's that could have waited until the New Year."

NEXT WEEK

Books of the Year
The men and women of action make their choice

Robin Hood rides again
Tim Brighouse suggests how some of the riches of the independent schools could be redistributed to local state schools

The heart of the village
Has the village school a future?
Superteacher 1987

Will you survive in the year to come?
Museum of Madness
A visit to Madagascar—Island of the Ancestors

Christmas Crossword

THE TIMES Educational Supplement

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 28 1988 NUMBER 3678

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Baker seeks solution to staffing crisis

Minister to push for more job-sharing

by James Meikle

Job-sharing is to be encouraged by the Education Secretary in an effort to bring more women back to the teaching profession—particularly in science and other shortage subject areas. Mr Kenneth Baker believes schools must follow industry's example if they are to prevent women being heavily outnumbered by men in certain subject areas.

The primary sector already employs a large number of part-time "married-mothers" and Mr Baker thinks that secondary schools should do more to attract women, both as job-sharing and part-timers.

The Minister, speaking at a seminar held by the Hughenden Foundation last week, said his Department had underestimated the scale of the teacher shortage in maths, physics, design and technology.

Job-sharing is still comparatively rare in teaching but the Inner London Education Authority and Sheffield City Council are among the authorities that have tried the idea. The benefits include having two minds on one job, a wider range of skills, and added status as schools for part-timers, although the lack of continuity has posed problems.

Mr Baker wants to increase the number of part-time science teachers, although he recognizes that local education authorities can be put off by increased staff costs. During last week's seminar he was also reminded the proper registers of women leaving to have children, and appropriate training schemes, will have to be introduced.

The Secretary of State remains convinced that his suggested pay structure, with five responsibility allo-

wances, is the best way of attracting experts in shortage subject areas.

However, he does not expect all teachers in such areas to be offered extra payments as inducements to enter or stay in the profession. They will first have to satisfy local authorities and heads that they are good teachers, although it is not clear how this would be done other than through pay-linked appraisal.

The Education Secretary also confirmed that he has commissioned research into the use of video-cassettes and other new technology to support science teaching in schools, work which is done by teachers whose main degrees will not in an appropriate way.

But such material, which would need careful evaluation, could be expensive. A 75-minute video-cassette about £100,000 to produce.

At the Hughenden Foundation seminar Mr Baker encouraged the suggestion that the academics and industrialists should form a small ad hoc group to advise him on existing shortages. They believe problems with grants and pension rights are among the hurdles facing people with scientific experience who want to make teaching a second career.

Meanwhile, the London borough of Croydon is responding to its own shortage crisis by offering jobs to six science graduates who do not have teaching qualifications. It has asked Mr Baker to give qualified teacher status (QTS) to the new recruits, who are due to start work next month.

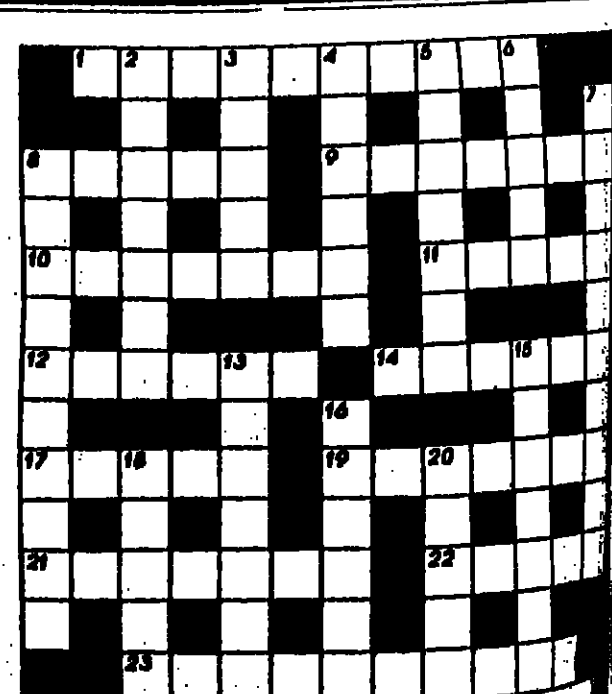
Their salaries, determined by individual agreement, could be higher than normal Burnham rates, and special in-service training is to be provided. They will also have a lighter workload.



Manger moment: children of Rosary RC Infant school, Camden, north-west London, present their nativity play. More Christmas scenes, page 8.

NOTICEBOARD

No 285 CROSSWORD by Rufus



ACROSS

- There may be plenty of jumpers at this exciting theatre (4,6)
- Tease the non-male member of the family (5)
- Devotee study (7)
- Cocktail for a fellow-traveller (4-3)
- Live in—prosperously (5)
- Notes in the distance from pigs (6)
- It will grow more by developing (6)
- Children's edition (5)
- Big fat in Canadian and American currency (7)
- One-eyed (4)

DOWN

- The French female gets subordinate to do the washing (7)
- Highest form of wit (5)
- Assemble the sailor's world? (6)
- State engineer's middle name (7)
- It turns up on the tenth (5)
- Improve a time without (10)
- A trying time for

- bad? (7)
- Pileated joint for Bishop (5)
- Standard on a peak without liquor (4,3)
- Letter from the test? (7)
- Peasants in a place (6)
- It has changed in many ways (10)
- Disorder of the eye (5)
- Solution to puzzle (10)

PEOPLE...

Mrs Jenny Collier, head of Stewart Headam school in east London, to be head of Redlands primary school, also in east London.

Mr Roger Peel, senior housemaster at Trent College, to be head of Kimbolton School, Cambridgeshire, from next September. In succession to Mr David Donnell.

Mrs Susan Horsman, head of Barr's Hill school and community college, Coventry, to be head of Edgbaston high school, from next September. In succession to Mrs Valerie Balson. She is currently secondment to Warwick University, where she is undertaking research into the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative.

A C Richardson, head of Philipps high school, Bury, to be head of Osmaston grammar school, Lancashire, from January.

EVENTS...

December 19 and January 5 National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, London SW1. Demonstrations by master model-makers from the British Model Soldier Society. Activity sheets based on the exhibition of historical documents from the museum archive will be available until January 18.

December 20 Goldsmiths' Youth Orchestra, conductor Rupert Bond, concert at St Stephen's Church, Lewisham High Street, London SE13 at 7.30pm with works by Rossini, Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky and Elgar and carols for the audience.

Tickets £2 (£50 unwaged) at the door.

December 29, 30, 31 and January 2 and 3 Wonders of Steam at the Science Museum, South Kensington, at 3pm: a series of demonstrations by Aubrey Tully to show how ideas with steam were put into actions which changed the world. Suitable for children aged 8 and over and their families. Tickets are required and are available free by writing to: Education Service (CE), Science Museum, Exhibition Road, London SW7, or in person from the information office on the day.

December 29—January 4 *Anansi and the Sky God* is a holiday programme for children at the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 with the Teller of Time. Traditional stories from West Africa and the Caribbean accompanied by music and dance. Suitable for all ages. Admission free. Programmes take place at 11.30am and 2.30pm from Monday to Saturday and at 2.30pm and 3.45pm on Sunday and last about an hour.

December 29 and 30 Two special sessions at London Zoo for the under-7s on December 29 and the over-7s on December 30 at 2pm in the Meeting Rooms. Keepers will talk about their work and introduce some of the animals.

From December 29 A programme of lectures and tours at the Tate Gallery for 8 to 13-year-olds at 11.30am on how famous artists painted when young (December 29); paintings of everyday life and the art of fantasy (December 30 and January 2); ways in which artists have depicted light (December 31, January 5 and

7); mysteries of surrealism—for children over the age of 14 and their parents (January 6); the mystery of non-objective art—also for over 14-year-olds (January 8); and mature masters—how prodigies painted when old (January 9). Four new full-colour gallery packs are also available this year, two for 8 to 12-year-olds and two for those over the age of 12. Each contains information and questions about 10 masterpieces in the collection. Price £1.95 from the gallery shop.

December 30 Tales from Ancient Egypt for 7 to 12-year-olds with the Egyptian storyteller, Samira Kirolos, at 10.30am, 11.45am, 2pm and 3.15pm. Free tickets from the information desk. Children's trails for the Archaeology in Britain exhibition are also available.

December 30 Royal Society of Arts Dr Mann Young People's Christmas Lecture in the footsteps of Scott by Robert Swan, Expedition Leader, Scott Antarctic Expedition 1984-86 at 2.30pm at the RSA, John Adam Street, London WC2. Admission by free ticket from the assistant secretary's office.

December 31 and January 2 A Mexican Christmas at the Museum of Mankind, Burlington Gardens, London W1. Mexican nativity scenes will be on display and children are invited to take part in games and art and craft activities for an hour, the morning of the afternoon on the whole day. Suitable for 7 to 12-year-olds. No booking required. Contact the Museum of Mankind information desk for more details (01-457 2224 ext 43).

Until January 3 Arts Theatre Gallery, 6-7 Great Newport Street, London WC2—an exhibition of original artwork from Jan Penkowski's Christmas. Admission free.

January 3-11 New Year holiday activities for the family at the Museum of London, EC2, based on *Hello Daily*, the special exhibition of dolls. On January 2, the Historical Association's children's lecture on *The World Comes to London* by Dr John Fines, will be given at the museum at 2.30pm. Tickets for the lecture from the Historical Association, 59a Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4JH.

INFORMATION...

Job sharing Readers with experience of job-sharing in teaching are invited to write to Mrs June Smedley, 29 Angrove Road, East Leake, Loughborough, Leicestershire, who is conducting a survey on the subject.

PUBLICATIONS...

Poems on the Underground Sets of poster-poems, including the "Loch Ness Monster's Song" are available to teachers while supplies last. Please send £1 to *Poems on the Underground*, 124 Mansfield Road, London NW3 2LB.

Guiding the professionals—a survey of 162 guidelines for professionals on the 1981 Education Act by Rick Rogers for the Centre for Studies on the Integration in Education, 22.50 from CSIE, The Sports Society, 16 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6HQ.

Council disrupts party games

Children at several Manchester primary schools were expected to miss end-of-term Christmas parties last week as a result of a city council instruction.

Around a fifth of the city's primary schools traditionally send pupils home for a morning or afternoon while teachers prepare for the festivities. But in a letter to all primary heads a few weeks ago, Mr Gordon Hainsworth, Manchester's chief education officer, said the practice had to stop. It was below the statutory mini-

mum attendance level and inconvenient for parents.

Mr Des Murphy, Manchester secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers said: "I understand there are several schools who cancelled parties as a result of the letter."

He said that while he accepted the legal argument, he would have appreciated earlier notification. His own pupils at St Cuthbert's RC junior school would be able to have a party without taking time off, he added, because so many parents were willing

to help. But at nearby Beaver Road infants' school two parties were cancelled. Mrs Pauline Thomas, the head, said parents would have come in and helped, given more notice.

Mr Roy Jobson, senior assistant education officer at Manchester I.e.a., said the council had acted partly in response to parents' concern over the amount of school that children missed through teacher action this year and because of a reluctance to forego free school lunches, provided to 50 per cent of pupils this year.

No smoke without stress

by Sue Surkes

Teenage tobaccophiles are tetchier than their non-puffing peers, according to a survey of adolescent smoking. They have lower self-regard, feel less in control of their lives and have experienced more stressful events, Dr Gill Peany and Dr Jim Robertson of University College, Cardiff found.

One in four youngsters under 15 take up smoking despite growing awareness of associated health risks, they told the London conference of the British Psychological Society held at the City University last week.

They compared 138 regular smokers with a group of non-smokers and used questionnaires to assess certain psychological characteristics of the 12 to 15-year-olds.

Interviews revealed that smokers had been through more life changes and showed higher levels of stress.

New cover price

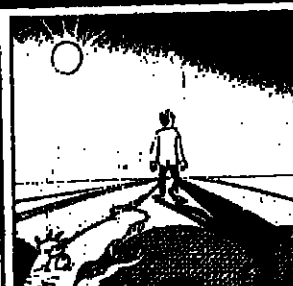
The price of *The TES* will go up to 60p from Friday, January 2. The increase is the first for two years.

THIS WEEK

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The road to Ruritania

Secretary of State, I wonder if I could go over some things which have to be done before your lunch with the Ruritanian Minister of Education."

"Certainly, Fortescue. By all means. The Foreign Office brief is most interesting."



"I'm very glad, sir. You've got Channel 4 at 2."

"I never knew Ruritania was part of the Council of Europe..."

"And Radio 2 at 4."

"Apparently they're the only Eastern bloc country which made it - nobody knew exactly where Ruritania is..."

"And there's BBC2 for Newsnight..."

"They've been having a lot of trouble with schools lately..."

"Who, sir? Oh - you mean the Ruritaniins. Indeed yes. And you've got your press conference at 5pm..."

"Apparently the teachers got a bit uppity, Fortescue - did a pay deal with the local authorities without consulting the Minister. It's all so jolly enterprising..."

"And BBC1 wants to consult you about a new soap opera, sir..."

"But it made the Minister mad. He simply stamped off to the Supreme Soviet and demanded a decree to let him enforce his own pay scales in place of theirs. Can you imagine what would happen in this country if the Secretary of State tried to do that? Did you say 'soap opera'?"

"Yes, sir. They plan to do an adaptation of *Jenny*..."

Lives with Eric and Martin. It's to be part of their Aids campaign..."

"And as if that weren't enough, Fortescue, the Minister simply abolished all collective bargaining on teachers' pay, and made himself the Grand Panjandrum. The teachers will in future get what he says, no more, no less. Can you imagine anything more dictatorial? ... I'm not sure it would really make a good soap opera. What about traditional values of marriage and family life and all that?"

"They promise a second series called *Eric Lives with Jenny and Martin* to correct the balance and boost the nuclear family..."

"Of course the teachers' unions are furious - in Ruritania, I mean. The RUT tried to raise the cry of 'Solidarity', but there are hopeless divisions between the various teachers' associations, and the Minister can get away with murder by setting one against another..."

"And then they are anxious not to forget the single parents, so there's to be a third version called *Jenny and Eric Live with Martin*... It's all extremely economical..."

"I shall be very interested to see what this pay dispute has done to Ruritanian teachers' morale and productivity... And the local authorities are just as furious..."

"You won't forget you've got the *Jimmy Young Show* on Thursday, and *Desert Island Discs* on Friday..."



by James Meikle

Resistance to imposed salary settlement grows

by James Meikle

Teachers and employers are stepping up their campaign against imposition by the Government of a pay and conditions package while leaving open by a little while longer the prospect of changing their own proposals.

A majority of union negotiators have decided against trying to modify a structure which they know is unacceptable to the Education Secretary, but the Labour-led employers may yet make changes when the full Burnham negotiating committee meets on January 12.

The local authorities were expected to suggest amendments to the agreement signed with the National Union of Teachers and the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association when they met the unions last Friday.

They stopped short of doing so, although they asked the teachers if they wanted to. The invitation was rejected by an alliance of the NUT and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, whose members have heavily rejected with the negotiated agreement and more hierarchical proposals from Mr Kenneth Baker.

The manoeuvring seemed to leave the way open for Mr Baker to win public relations points as the Government rallied its supporters in the House of Lords where the Bill

was debated on January 12. The new advisory body on pay and conditions was also heartened by the prospect of a vote north of the border where the largest union, the Educational Institute of Scotland, is recommending to members acceptance of a pay deal reached at the Scottish Joint Negotiating Council, which keeps within Government cash limits.

This merger previously separate primary and secondary pay grades, giving a maximum salary of £13,300 from October 1988. There will be three grades of Senior Teacher phased in from that date, with a top salary of £14,500.

ES leaders point out they will retain negotiating rights and have persuaded employers to drop some of the strong management powers recommended for heads in the recent Main Inquiry report, which failed to win full backing from either the unions or the Government.

Teachers south of the border are privately disappointed that a united front on pay may soon come to an end. The Trades Union Congress, which has kept out of the pay battle for two years, has now joined the campaign on negotiating rights, because it fears that the Government plans similar curbs on bargaining powers for other public sector workers.

A TUC delegation met Mr Baker this week after Mrs Thatcher refused to see union leaders.

The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations has also warned the Government against imposing a pay settlement but has suggested that an independent pay review body for teachers would be better than the advisory committee envisaged under Mr Baker's legislation.

The employers, including most Conservatives, want to propose a new statutory joint pay and conditions negotiating committee to teachers, when Burnham and the discredited conditions body, CLEA/ST, meet next month.

Amendments on pay and structure, if they are put at all, will involve an addition to Principal Teacher posts and a slight delay in paying the money up to April 1988 to fall within Government limits of £608 million.

The employers are committed to sticking to the agreement reached at Acas anyway. There will be two riders to any formal decision of Burnham. Mr Baker will have to agree to pay the Government's share of the bill since negotiations for the authorities could not leave the councils with a commitment that could make some bankrupt.

The Government's planned withdrawal of negotiating rights would also have to be dropped or defeated in the House of Lords.

NUT leaders were forced to put a brave face on ballot results on the Acas agreement. They won a majority (60,912 for, 44,216 against) but the turn-out was only 55 per cent, similar to that in the "yes" vote from the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association.

The NAS/UMT won its unexpected large majorities against both the Acas agreement and the Baker proposals but only 42 per cent of the membership voted.



Roxy and friends: time for a well-earned rest

Cash ceiling 'not enough' say I.e.a.s

Local education authorities will be allowed to spend £297 million during the next financial year on capital expenditure programmes. This is an increase of 18 per cent, but the local authorities say it is not enough.

The Government expects authorities to "top up" their allocations with funds from the sale of capital assets such as land and redundant buildings.

The Department of Education and Science estimates that £2.8 billion will be available from such sales. But authorities will only be allowed to spend around 30 per cent of that, and will have to spread it across several council departments.

Mr Richard Loe, chairman of Manchester's education committee, said his authority's allocation would just scratch the surface. Manchester, which bid for £30 million, will be allowed to spend just over £4.9 million - an increase of £2.4 million on the current financial year. "The allocation means that the mounting problem of crumbling Victorian schools will continue," he said.

The Inner London Education Authority will have just under £15 million to spend, compared with its bid of around £48 million. The allocation represents a rise of around £1.5 million on this year's ceiling figure and is, according to a spokesman, "hopelessly inadequate".

Mr Bob Morris, education officer of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, said the figures seemed "remarkably modest" when seen in the context of authorities' claims of need. "Nobody should imagine that authorities would waste time putting in unrealistic bids," he added.

One, two, three, jump

Ever ready to surprise their friends, the Scottish teachers have followed up their massive rejection of the Government's modified Main proposals with a quick bargaining session at the Scottish Office.

Now their leaders have a new deal which they are prepared to commend to their members.

They have secured changes (some material, some cosmetic) which they think will do enough to ally their colleagues' wrath.

The Government, in the shape of the Secretary of State for Scotland, has wisely regarded the price worth paying for peace north of the Border.

The prospect for England and Wales, on the other hand, seems to grow more perilous, not less, as one

day follows another. Any glimmer of hope that the teachers and the employers might combine to seek compromise amendments to Mr Baker's package disappeared last week when, instead, they joined in reaffirming the pay structure which they know to be unacceptable to the Government.

It seems they are likely to go ahead and put this deal up to the Burnham Committee.

Of course, they know that if they did vote it through Burnham, the Government would not pay its share of the cost and with a number of local authorities already teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, they will have to safeguard their rear with some verbal escape clause. It's hard to think of a less responsible game of brinkmanship.

Nor is it easy to conceive of a course of action better calculated to win friends for Mr Baker and influence people (like members of the House of Lords) in his favour. The Gaderene swine showed a shrewder understanding of their own best interest.

Brent takes a breather

Brent has been wise to accept Mr Baker's Section 68 direction and go quietly rather than challenge him in the courts. Left-wing councils like the courts no more than the Secretary of State. But it must have been tempting to the more incorrigible Brent councillors to try their chances in an application for judicial review given the element of unpredictability which attends cases of this kind. Fortunately the voice of common sense has prevailed. Miss McGoldrick can now get on with her work without this business hanging over her head.

It does not, however, look as if this is quite the end of the story. Brent may have given up the attempt to use its disciplinary procedures against the head of Sudbury infants' school but it has still a mind to inquire into the

actions of some members of the governing body against whom racist allegations are being made. It looks as if this is a classic case of a school with a very large ethnic minority population and a governing body which is chaired by an Asian and includes several black governors, which wants to avoid becoming a ghetto school because it earnestly wishes to maintain its credibility as a multi-cultural community.

To avoid becoming a ghetto school it must maintain its reputation with white as well as black parents, which takes the argument into questions of "balance" which, in certain circumstances, risk being dismissed out of hand as betraying essentially racist attitudes.

What is quite clear is that "anti-racism" puts a premium on negative activity - rooting out those alleged to be guilty of "racist" words or heretical opinions; trying people for their words or their opinions and not for their overt actions.

Haringey has proved how easy it is for anti-racism to divert effort and zeal

into 'non-productive channels' as if there were not enough for the dedicated Miss McGoldrick of this world to do without devoting themselves, full time, to fending off the witch-hunters).

As for Mr Baker, he has scored a minor triumph. His use of his statutory powers has been vindicated, and he has served notice on other authorities that he is not in any way inhibited by past DfES failures (as at Tameside 10 years ago). In standing up for Miss McGoldrick he has pleased all teachers and demonstrated to other I.e.a.s that he would do the same again if they adopt the tactics of the "loony left".

... no comment

"Concern was expressed that Stockport discourage teachers from having children in school."

From report on an equal opportunities workshop organized in October by Stockport local education authority.

The Nativity is God's gift to primary education, a quintessential teaching aid which serves all classroom styles, old and new. Its simple and powerful imagery appeals directly to every young child - well, perhaps not every child.

In the decorated classrooms of Britain's cities last week there were children for whom the plastic dolls in their cardboard cribs represented, at the very least, a confusing tug of loyalties. In a multi-faith society, divinity in the classroom can be blasphemy at home.

It is more than half a century since I used to cross the road at this time of the year to avoid having to pass close to the blue-lit tableaux outside the church on the corner of our street. There was no message of love and hope reaching out to me from the crib or the figure tending it.

They were the painted superstitions of a hostile majority, who daily made it clear in the playground, with their sneers and their fists, that they had no love for my kind.

The rejection by my juvenile peers

And suffer children not to...

was, on the whole, less threatening than the attempts of some of their enlightened elders to bring me into their fold. As a five-year-old I lay in a hospital ward over Christmas willing myself not to join in the carols, embarrassed by this fulsome worship of a false Messiah.

I had been taught that he was a rather wet renegade who had caused us a lot of trouble over the centuries. "Suffer the little children to come unto Me" said the text painted on the walls, recruiting propaganda for the other side. I hid from it in my books.

Early divorce from my childhood associations and marriage to a couple of (consecutive) Anglican wives have long since washed away this alienation. I am of that confident liberal agnosticism which is prepared to pat any decent religious ethic on the head and



Mark Jackson

they did not worship the prophet from Nazareth.

In the classroom the bewildered child, wary of challenging the dominant theology, can only keep repeating: "I do not draw people." The uncomprehending teacher thinks she needs more encouragement and stands over her while she finishes the picture.

The story, exquisitely written, almost persuaded me that literature still has some relevance to life. It brought vividly back those long-buried fears, that childhood sense of being under constant pressure from an alien culture of cruelties, meanness, and selfishness.

Confident Christians nowadays are likely to be aware of the challenge of their symbols and the sensitivities of those who belong to other persuasions. It is the secularized teacher, with no

particular religious affiliation, who is likely to regard the Nativity scene as ideologically neutral and universally acceptable.

My wife (baptized, catechized, confirmed) teaches in a London school which has Islamic children from Morocco and Bangladesh, Orthodox Greeks and Irish Catholics, black Pentecostals and maybe the odd Rastafarian or two, as well as the nationally CoE white indigenes. The school is self-consciously aware of its need to combat racism and ethnocentricity, and to respect the mother-cultures of all its pupils. But it had a crib this year, like most schools.

My wife said she'd like to read the Radio 4 story, which, unfortunately, has not been published as yet. It is by a woman named Rahila Khan who lives in Brighton.

I would like it to be used in all initial-training courses. It won't be a substitute for a dimly remembered East End childhood, but it might help prevent teachers from treading on children's souls.

Mark Jackson

Being earnest on homosexuality

by Sue Surkes

Oscar Wilde would have turned in his grave, had he been privy to last week's Lords Second Reading of a Bill to stop councils promoting homosexuality in schools.

For the Local Government Act 1986 (Amendment) Bill introduced by Lord Halsbury, the president of the National Council for Christian Standards, Pentecostals and maybe the odd Rastafarian or two, as well as the nationally CoE white indigenes. The school is self-consciously aware of its need to combat racism and ethnocentricity, and to respect the mother-cultures of all its pupils. But it had a crib this year, like most schools.

The Bill would prevent councils from helping the promotion of homosexuality as an "acceptable family relationship" or the teaching of such acceptability in maintained schools. There were responsible gays who made the best of their situation, Lord Halsbury said. But those who made the worst of it were the sick ones whose symptoms were exhibitionism, promiscuity, proselytizing and boasting. They acted as reservoirs for venereal diseases of all kinds.

Hardly a bench was empty as their Lordships took turns to pronounce on the homosexual affliction. For Lord Campbell of Alloway, gays were "sad and lonely people". Lord Swinfen described them as sexually-disabled,

and Lord Longford as handicapped. So-called "loony leftie" councils such as Brent and Haringey provided rich pickings for the assembled *distinguees*, although the debate was conducted in the best possible taste with no more than fleeting references to the titles of controversial sex education books. The tenor was seriously serious throughout. In fact, the only laughs

were provided by Lord Denning who mischievously updated a biblical reference to the wicked sinners of Sodom to incorporate the councillors of Haringey who "corrupted the children of the borough exceedingly..."

It fell to Lord Longford to try to redirect the discussion back to earth. In his school days, at least, homosexuality was not a prerequisite of the Left, he ventured. Indeed, public schoolboys tended to become self-righteous.

Lord Graham of Edmonton, who feared the amendment would repress discussion in schools, said that while Lord Campbell had talked of the Bill as not being designed to harm homosexuals, "we have heard various phrases which, to me, were designed, if not to harm or harass them certainly to indicate an attitude of mind towards them".

Lord Halsbury's Bill was granted an unopposed Second Reading, but is unlikely to become law. The Government, said the environment undersecretary Lord Stelmarsdale, did not disagree with its aims but its means. The new Education Act would give parents a bigger say over sex education and had to be given a chance.

Lord Halsbury: not acceptable

Over the finish line...

Eight-year-old Foxy is calling it a day. Owner Johanna Beumer (above), a teacher by day and greyhound racing enthusiast by night, has decided that he deserves a settled retirement.

Mrs Beumer, part-owner of the Independent Whittington School in North London, races four dogs of her own and has found homes for 600 others whose racing days were over or which had been abandoned.

She is often to be seen at London greyhound tracks decked out from head to toe in the colours of her various racing dogs.

THE TIMES

Year out, year in



As another one bites the dust, *The Times* gazes into something more substantial than a crystal ball; we ask futurologists what 1987 might bring and we announce, by means of two calendars, what it will bring - generally and, specifically, in sport. We also look back, at "The Year Of..." - or rather, we ask if that concept isn't a little overworked. But if we prefer not to label 1986, we shall certainly review its traumas and triumphs.

... and regularly in *The Times*, Bernard Levin (right) on the way we live now, Suzy Menkes on fashion, Irving Wardle on the theatre, Frances Gibb on the law, Peter Ackroyd on books, Shona Crawford Poole on travel, Philip Howard on words... and much more each week



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PLATFORM



Life classes: true riches in the public schools (left), making ends meet in the maintained sector



Envy is not an attractive feeling to come to terms with, yet that is the best description of the emotions provoked by the burgeoning private sector of schooling.

Of course I don't mean the cranky religious schools which emerge from time to time in poky city buildings, still less the Dickensian, crumbling country mansions with a new board, no history and a desperately qualified staff. These schools make what the Americans would call "a fast buck" either from the over-anxious with more money than sense who seek a cure for educational diseases such as dyslexia or, scandalously, from local education authorities which, in default of making proper provision themselves, fill them with forgotten youngsters who are called maladjusted.

No, the envy comes from the contemplation of the reputable private schools which belong to prestigious organizations such as the Headmasters' Conference. Some of them are very good schools indeed but they flourish at the expense of the rest of us. Quite simply, they cream 10-15 per cent of youngsters aged 12 to 16 - mostly those with the least need of the extra privilege and advantage which such schooling provides.

Sometimes the unit cost in such schools is two, three or more times greater than in the maintained schools which educate the remaining 90 per cent. The DES Statistical Bulletin 485 showed a steady widening of the gap in favour of the independent sector which has 50 per cent more teachers per pupil: recently, the Educational Pub-

Tim Brighouse argues that it is time to introduce a levy which would transfer some of the independent sector's wealth to state schools

Why Robin Hood needs to ride again

lishers' Council revealed the private sector spending 100 per cent more on books and equipment, and even the contents of a school meal, according to the *Hotel and Caterer*, is twice as expensive in that sector.

How can it be right or fair to spend so much more on one set of future citizens than another during the statutory school years? Indeed, how can there ever really be justice or equality of opportunity - even political freedom - while such unfairness prevails. As long ago as 1922, William Temple, that troublesome cleric, put it well when he said: "Education is the means of entrance into the fullness of life, individual and social. So long as this is attainable by those who happen to have money and unattainable by those who have not, we are permitting an injustice which will of necessity permeate the whole structure of society."

This stark and unacceptable contrast between private and maintained schooling was brought into sharp relief one frosty Saturday last February. It was the sort of day when trees are a startling negative edged white against a black sky and the roads were all rutted with ice. As I posted a letter in North Oxford, nine boys with misty shouts of "That was fun!" were shepherded - after a final slide - into a minibus by three black-coated teachers. These were teachers with a difference for they had already enjoyed a 10 per cent pay rise for some months. Untouched by the nationwide union action, these teachers belonged to a leading preparatory school replete with science laboratories, ample equipment and well-stocked library and sports facilities.

The parents in this North Oxford school pay for a form of social engineering. They expect their children, after moving on to Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Marlborough and the like, to emerge as budding statesmen, judges, doctors, captains of industry, leaders of the armed forces, journalists, actors or senior civil servants. They are not often disappointed. The

school produces few electricians, plumbers, road-sweepers, clerks or car-workers. And never a mine-worker or a steelman among their many alumni.

I drove north that morning to an old steel town to talk to a residential weekend course for 70 teachers who work in state schools which used to produce steel-workers and miners in abundance - until the works were closed and the mines modernized. The landscape was punctuated by roofless factories, dirty grey tower blocks, flat-roofed schools built 20 years ago in

How can it be right or fair to spend so much more on one set of future citizens than another?

disease-ridden concrete. Like a finsel toy from Woolworth's, those brave new schools quickly broke down. A teacher told me of her school which was still letting in water after its third set of window frames and its second roof. Lessons were punctuated (unpredictably) by bells as pupils hurry from one pointless

lesson to the next before emerging to a Youth Training Scheme and, ultimately, the dole. No judges from her schools, no actors, no doctors, no lawyers and only minor civil servants.

So what are we to do about these problems - what Harry Judge in his book *A Generation of Schooling* called "the real but insoluble problem of independent education". Abolition of the independent sector isn't on the political agenda and, in any case, isn't realistic. Most people want to preserve the right of parents to choose to buy advantage for their children even in the compulsory years - even if it is at the expense of the equity of life chances for the majority.

Over the years the resolution of this problem has defied all attempts to solve it. There was the Fleming Report in 1944, when the percentage attending independent schools was much smaller. Then in the late 1960s there were further reports by committees headed by John Newsam and David Donnison.

Ironically, the independent sector received its greatest boost from the Labour Party which promoted comprehensive schools (a move that frightened the articulate middle class) and then abolished the direct grant schools. So, at a stroke, the state sector lost 103 schools.

The independent sector has the sort of independence that every school should have. There are, perhaps, two further steps which the political parties should take in the run-up to the General Election. They presumably would all agree that the state and independent sectors should be put on a more equitable footing. The first step to achieve this would be to expand the Assisted Places Scheme so that all HMC boarding schools provided places for 50 per cent of their pupils on boarding need as opposed to academic ability so that those most in need of positive discrimination could receive it. Such schools should still enjoy a charitable status.

This status, however, should be removed from day independent schools so that they may pay rates along with the state sector. They should also be required to pay one new educational rate as a supplement to a general reform of the system. This rate would be based on the amount by which its fees exceed the unit cost of its schools in its local area. The state figure would be abated by 50 per cent but multiplied by the number of its pupils. This money would then be paid to a trust for special needs children run by representatives of the independent schools and local state schools.

By these means a modern educational Robin Hood would ride again and distribute from the rich some advantage to the poor.



Dr William Temple's arch-critic of the divided education system

Tim Brighouse is the chief education officer of Oxfordshire.

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Profitt and loss

Wanted: the right person for the hot seat as chief education officer of the London borough of Brent. The appointment is still open, despite two sets of advertisements following the premature departure of Adrian Parsons in the summer. This time six candidates reached the shortlist. The appointments panel, advised by race relations chief Russell Profitt, spent 14 hours last Friday interviewing. None were quite up to it, it appears, as the panel decided not to choose any of them.

Baker's roll call

Kenneth Baker, the Education Secretary, is emulating our American cousins in their anti-social custom of holding breakfast-time meetings. One dyspeptic DES official found himself eating three one morning this week, one before the crack of dawn at home, one with the Association of University Teachers, and the third with the headteachers. It pays to go early though: at 7.45 the AUT got croissants and bacon butties. The poor old NAHT had to make do with croissants at 8.15.

Minority wrongs

"Indisposed" of name and address supplied writes to the magazine *Junior Education* which has introduced a supplement to capture advertisements for primary jobs that "my staff and I were terrified to read Brent's advertisement... Are you not allowed to censor anything? Surely my profession has not sunk so low as to be offering a job to a lesbian or gay."

Child benefit

Congratulations to the DES's newest grandmother. To Angela Rumbold's daughter, a bouncing boy.

Top of the tree

John Pearman, the employers' leader in the pay talks, might not be able to deliver a Christmas present to the hard-up teachers in terms of a huge salary increase; but as far as Wakefield is concerned he is Father Christmas. At least his local newspaper thinks so. At a party given by the new public relations unit at the town hall, the chief reporter of the *Yorkshire Evening Post* presented Mr Pearman with one of the paper's bill boards proclaiming: "Santa Pearman lights up city."

Bunkering off

How many schoolchildren go to the golf course? Enough back in 1983 to be applying a surprising 720 teams to the schools championship run by the Golf Foundation. Then came the troubles, first to Scotland, homeland of golf-for-all, and entries slumped from 186 in 1983 to just 80 this year. With only three in a team, the promoters said they would accept a parent as minder on away fixtures but the dominoes said no. "One can only conclude teachers are putting every obstacle in the way just to strengthen their own case," lamented Lesley Atwood, the foundation director. Now she has found a way of getting round the next bout of industrial action. With the help of New West, four new championships each for a separate age group and based on clubs, not schools, will be launched next year. Youngest category is for under-15s. How many there are of them may be another surprise.

Acronym

Call for race bullying inquiry

by Howard Sharron

Birmingham's chief race relations adviser wants an inquiry into racial bullying at the city's schools after the revenge killing of a pupil.

Seem Keyes, aged 15, died after a playground stabbing by Rustum Ali, aged 13. The Asian boy, who was subjected to racially motivated tormenting for more than a year before the incident, was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to three years' youth custody.

Mr Kurshid Ahmed said the case and its background were sufficiently serious to warrant a thorough investigation.

He also challenged an assistant chief education officer, Mr Peter Wylie, to come forward with the evidence to justify his comments that "racist incidents in schools are not a major issue".

Mr Ahmed said: "Racial bullying has been commonly reported in other cities, and I have no doubt it takes

place in Birmingham. I find it hard to believe what Mr Wylie says and should like to know what the basis of his view is."

There has been a growing rift between the city's education department and race relations officials.

The community relations council has been highly critical of what it claims is the authority's complacency and failure to implement any effective multicultural and anti-racist education proposals, and in its abuse of Section 11 money under the 1966 Local Government Act to help ethnic minority pupils.

The community relations council was instrumental in bringing to the Home Office's attention that more than 20 clerical assistants and 40 dinner ladies, paid for by Section 11 money, were employed in mainly white schools.

Section 11 grants are supposed to be used for assisting pupils who have

special needs arising from their different cultural backgrounds. Following a Home Office review, no clerical or dinner lady posts were allowed to be funded in Birmingham under the legislation.

However, the CRC claims that the city is still abusing the grants in its employment of 142 classroom assistants.

Although the job descriptions conform with the criteria for the grants and ask for assistants who are bilingual in Asian languages, only 21 of the 142 are Asian and bilingual.

The majority are qualified nursery nurses who, because of their National Nursery Examinations Board qualifications, are paid £1,000 a year more than their Asian counterparts - even though the latter are often at least bilingual with recognized degrees from their original country.

The CRC maintains that the qualification bar amounts to indirect discrimination under the Race Relations Act.

It also claims that the education department has made no progress towards implementing its own four-year-old multicultural policy, and has made no attempt to evaluate the impact of its other Section 11-funded posts or taken seriously the requirements in law to consult with the CRC before making its bid for monies to central government.

The CRC wants a deputy director to be appointed with the sole responsibility of implementing and monitoring multicultural and anti-racist education policies. It says school heads should be responsible for training staff in multicultural issues, and has called for a shift in emphasis from English as a Second Language to bilingual teaching. The CRC is demanding a system by which all racial incidents are reported centrally.

Muslims refuse to spare rod

by Bert Lodge

A leader of Walsall's Muslim community has blamed the English education system for the corporal punishment he believes is regularly used in the borough's nine Islamic schools.

The governors of one school have been told that several of their teachers observed bruises on the hands and bodies of Asian pupils the morning after evening attendance at the private Islamic school arranged by the local mosque.

Mr Phil Wood, the chairman of the governors at Chucky junior school, who is also a borough councillor, said one consequence was that Asian pupils were proving difficult in the more humane atmosphere of the day school.

"Heads report they are losing control because these Muslim pupils are used to the rule of iron in their evening classes and that's all they respond to."

The report was considered last week in a closed session of Walsall schools' subcommittee which resolved to ask Mrs Dinah Tuck, the director of education, to investigate the problem and consult with Muslim organizations to find a solution.

Mr Ishmael Mohammed, the manager of the Community Action Group Day Centre and a sponsor of the Muslim Information Centre, said this week: "Physical punishment is accepted as a normal part of our culture, although some parents are individually concerned about it."

"There wouldn't be such a need for corporal punishment if the children's Islamic culture were incorporated into the main curriculum. Then they wouldn't need to spend two hours in night school six days a week. The British schooling system is ignoring their needs."

Mr Mohammed pointed out that among the 1,500 Asian children regularly attending the schools arranged by local mosques, many were learning two foreign languages: Arabic, the language of the Koran, and Urdu, in which the traditional books were written. Yet the language of their home may be Gujarati.

"In addition, the classes are large, the tutors are often voluntary and they take their frustration out on the children. Society is to blame for failing to meet the multicultural challenge."

Corporal punishment will be outlawed in maintained schools from next year. Parliament decided last July, but the Act will not apply to independent schools. Although some of the Islamic evening classes are held in ordinary schools, they are wholly private and the pupils do not fall within the category of "funded by the local authority". Theoretically, pupils will be exempt from corporal punishment during the day but liable to it under the same roof in the evening.



Present time: sixth-form pupils from Ysgol Dinas Bran print their own wrapping paper at Llangollen's European Folk Studies Centre in Clwyd

It's getting even tougher at the top, heads tell ILEA

by Geraldine Hackett

The capital's headteachers are becoming increasingly frustrated with their workload - and ready to complain openly.

More than 200 lobbied the Inner London Education Authority ostensibly to protest at the composition of the education committee. Their two union education committees, the Teachers' Association and the National Association of Head Teachers, achieved their aim and secured one of the seats.

But it was the underlying anger over an ineffective midday supervision system and the problems of school management during teachers' industrial action that ensured the large turnout, said Mr John Phillips, an SHA area secretary.

Classes in London schools have been sent home because National Union of Teachers members refuse to cover for absent colleagues. The ILEA cover for absent colleagues, 4,000 pupils estimates that on average 4,000 pupils based on clubs, not schools, will be launched next year. Youngest category is for under-15s. How many there are of them may be another surprise.

Heads are responsible for lunchtime supervision with the aid of ancillary staff, but vacancies remain. Heads maintain teachers should be available to deal with discipline problems. The two headteacher unions, the SHA and the National Association of

Head Teachers, are due to meet the ILEA in January to review lunchtime arrangements.

"We recognize that teachers will not go back to midday supervision, and what we would like to see is payment for heads and deputy heads who supervise," said Mr Phillips.

Relations between the ILEA and headteachers have been strained for some time, partly because of the authority's failure to consult, says Mrs Sonia Pollock, an executive council member of the NAHT.

"To be fair, a lot of the present members are new and do not know the system. Heads feel they are being dictated to more than in the past," she said.

Neither heads' union supports the ILEA's plans for a pupils' parliament and there has also been resistance to its insistence on heads monitoring the ethnic origin of staff.

The authority has given way over the composition of the education committee. Under the original proposals for its make-up, the headteacher unions shared a seat with the Assistant Masters' Association, which the ILEA would not be represented.

A compromise has been finally

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Peter Clemence and the pupils of Down Ampney: "I have never had any discipline problems here."

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Kelth Manning visits one of the many village primaries whose future is in jeopardy and discovers why the closure of such schools is regarded as a mortal blow to their communities



Going for the heart

In a sleepy Gloucestershire village 18 children attend a school where the atmosphere of calm and enthusiastic study must be the envy of many city parents.

Down Ampney Church of England School, six miles from Cirencester and a dozen from Swindon, is seen by defenders of village schools as a classic example of the "small is beautiful" approach to education.

But tiny village schools are under attack, both on financial as well as educational grounds, and in some parts of the country are in danger of disappearing altogether.

Mr Peter Clemence, headteacher of Down Ampney, came to the school 22 years ago when there were 56 pupils. Now there are just 18, aged between four-and-a-half and 11, and one other teacher—a part-timer who works in the mornings.

When the 1985 White Paper, *Better Schools*, expressed concern about schools with fewer than three staff being able to provide a sufficiently wide range of subjects, Down Ampney's future looked in doubt. (Schools generally need 55 pupils—sometimes 65—to qualify for three teachers.)

"A year ago I was rather pessimistic," says Mr Clemence. Several schools in the region have closed, but he believes his will survive. There is a proposal to build 60 new houses in the village, plus a refurbishment scheme for a small council estate.

"We need more first-time buyers and younger people coming into the village, or all our institutions—the village hall, Cubs and Guides and various clubs—will suffer."

The school—at the heart of the village, next to the village store and post office—is of Cotswold stone with mullioned windows and a clock tower, and was opened in 1852.

The village exudes tranquillity, though the peace is occasionally shattered by the roar of aircraft taking off from the nearby Fairford air base.

During the day the school is the hub of village activity. For the 16 families who send children to the school, it is a meeting place where they are able to talk freely to the headteacher almost any time of day.

One of the parents, Mrs Pamela Valey, comes in daily to help with reading practice or arts and crafts.

"The children are very good at working on their own with very little supervision," said Mrs Valey, who is a qualified primary teacher. "At the youngest age it is a case of keeping the children creatively occupied and stimulated and I think they benefit a great deal by the variety of ideas of the different helpers."

Some parents prefer to send their

children to larger schools in Cirencester or Fairford. "But many prefer the smaller environment of this school, its atmosphere, the individual teaching he children receive and the slower pace," says Mr Clemence.

"There is no lack of curricular activities in the school. Most subjects are taught with topic work: geography, science, singing and music, arts and crafts. The three 'Rs' are taught to the infants in the mornings."

Inevitably, however, finding projects that will appeal to four-year-olds as well as 11-year-olds can prove difficult. "It doesn't always work but you can get the juniors to help the infants," Mr Clemence says.

The Down Ampney pupils also meet children from other small schools in the district for "cluster" activities—a maths workshop or music workshop. In a recent draft circular, Mr Kenneth Baker says the need for rationalization of small schools is educational, not financial. "The size of schools is a key factor in their ability to deliver the right sort of curriculum."

But Mr Clemence is not convinced by the Education Secretary's argument. "There is no difference in ability in a child coming from a small school from a child who has been to a large school. Yes, there are differences in character, but at a rural school pupils are used to a slower pace. But when children go on to secondary school great care is taken in the changeover."

"In a school of this size you have got almost one-to-one teaching, and can

"We need more first-time buyers and younger people coming into the village or all our institutions will suffer"

diagnose problems which require remedial treatment. Nor can I think of an occasion when I taught a child who got out of control. I have never had any discipline problems here."

In neighbouring Wiltshire, the threatened closure of another village school, Easton Royal, has resulted in the production of a booklet entitled *The Conspiracy Against Village Schools*, by Mr Christopher Buynan. In it he asserts: "It is clear, at the very least, that village schools are certainly no worse than larger schools, and are considerably better in terms of behaviour and attitudes of the pupils they produce—aspects of education that are currently causing the widest concern."

"If state education is indeed responsible for the drift towards 'the job society', one solution might be to break up large schools and replace them with smaller schools in the village pattern," Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody MP, battling to keep open a village school in Marbury, Cheshire, in her constituency, wants a Commons adjournment debate on closures.

Why try to encourage people to start businesses in rural areas if you close down such an essential amenity as the village school? she asks.

And Mrs Molly Stiles, of the National Association for the Support of Small Schools, says that it is not specialist teachers that are needed in the primary sector, but more teacher-pupil contact of the sort found in village schools.

But Mrs Stiles is quite happy to admit that she doesn't argue her case on educational grounds alone. "Keeping the village school keeps the heart in the village," she says.



Children in need sleep together for warmth and make do with vandalized play areas—Christmas isn't the only struggle

Christmas is traditionally a time of cheer but for many parents it heralds misery and debt. Julia Hagedorn reports

Santa's empty sack

In a dream, Christmas trees, tinsel and television advertising all herald the approach of Christmas. But for poor families the holiday is far from festive as, instead of turkey and Christmas pudding, they will be eating sausages and mash.

The greatest headache for those who are poor or near the breadline is that they desperately want to give their children what other children take for granted—new toys. And few of them are able to do so.

A recent Child Poverty Action Group survey has provided a distressing, and salutary, insight into the despair of hundreds of parents.

More than 200, over half of whom were single parents, described their feelings about Christmas to the CPAG researchers.

"The thought of Christmas is terrifying to me. They want so much and after having to say no all year, it's so hard and painful to have to say no at Christmas as well," (Single mother of two, West Yorkshire.)

"She said, 'I don't believe in Father Christmas.' To this I ask why. She said because he never comes to her house like all the rest of the kids at her school, who get nice presents off their Father Christmas." (Mother of one, London.)

"I would love for once to give them the things that they want and buy all

the fancy food, but for our family that's just a dream. God knows how my children feel." (Mother of two, Warrington.)

"All they had to eat last Christmas was sausages, chips, beans and toast-in-the-hole." (Mother of two, Bedfordshire.)

Additional pressure is put on children around Christmas-time by television advertising. Parents are both frustrated and angry about the effects on their children.

"The toys are deliberately advertised during children's programmes, and I think this is putting unbearable pressures on low-income families." (Mother of three, Essex.)

"My son has told his kids the telly's broke—he can't face it any more. It is agonizing, seeing your grandchildren being brainwashed every night for weeks on end knowing full well that they haven't the slightest hope of ever receiving one of these toys." (Grandfather, Salford.)

"It's the oldest boy who suffers

most, as the children at school are getting these Transformers and different things. He can't understand why he can't have them." (Mother of two, Tyne and Wear.)

"What makes it worse is that some of the toys my daughter wants are what other kids of her age take for granted." (Single mother, Yorkshire.)

For most low-income families, says the CPAG, Christmas means going into debt or increasing it, either by postponing bills or by using credit.

But, however well they manage, the parents in the survey suffered from feelings of guilt and failure towards their children.

"I do my best for them at Christmas, but I know it's not enough. Every Christmas morning I have tears in my eyes thinking I could have done better for them." (Single mother of two, West Yorkshire.)

"I feel somehow I've failed to be a good parent to my children. I feel there should be some way of getting a few luxuries for them at Christmas, but

feed and clothe six of us, there isn't a lot over." (Mother of two, Lincoln.)

"I'm always glad when it's over, then there's always that horrible feeling, 'What a start to the New Year', no money, no hope." (Single mother of two, Leeds.)

"It isn't just Christmas that's a struggle, but every day of every week of every month, all year." (Single mother of four, Northamptonshire.)

Those who are more fortunate contribute to the massive total of nearly £16 billion spent on seasonal shopping. Children under eight years have an average of £53 spent on them, those aged 8 to 14 £107. And the average cost of Christmas for a couple with two children ranges from £250-£375, according to market research agencies.

Primary school heads are often acutely aware of the pressure on parents. And many express admiration for the way in which some cope.

Mrs Ellen Rust, head of Kingsgate infants' school in Kilburn, north Lon-

don, told *The TES*: "We do try to play down the gift side. The commercialism is pretty awful, but we do give each child a small gift. Somehow the parents manage; I don't have any parents coming to me and saying they can't. Although those who suffer, of course, are often the ones who don't let anyone know."

junior school in Newcastle, said: "Parents forego a great deal to make something of Christmas. There is no direct evidence that any child will go without. Parents will take on a massive amount of debt and repay it over the next 12 months."

But, he said, the school tries to play the celebration side of Christmas down and not raise the children's expectations in any way. All Christmas activities are carried out within the school budget so that no parent has to contribute anything.

"There is a tremendous amount of resilience still," he pointed out. "And there are different priorities. Christmas is one of them. Now, holidays, that is another matter, and many of them don't go away..."

Christmas on the Breadline by Stephen McEvaddy and Carey Oppenheim, £2 from CPAG, 1 Macklin Street, London WC2B 5NH.

Receiving dole—but little benefit

The Child Poverty Action Group claims that official Government figures prove its claim that the scale of the problem it exists to eradicate is worse today than it was 20 years ago.

The group has produced a report, *Poor Children: A Tale of Two Decades* by David Pichaud of the London School of Economics, which it has sent to the country's political leaders.

A couple with two children under 11 will now receive £68.80 per week on ordinary supplementary benefit, Mr Pichaud points out. Although this represents a 14 per cent increase in purchasing power since 1965, it means that such families are receiving only 39 per cent of the average male manual wage compared to 48 per cent 21 years ago.

Mr Pichaud says that, overall, the number of children dependent on supplementary benefit has increased fourfold since 1965. Now one in six



One in nine children have unemployed parents

children is in a family dependent on supplementary benefit. And most of these, contrary to popular mythology, are in families with an unemployed person—rather than in single-parent families—1,096,000 as compared to 877,000 (Hansard, 1986).

The most potent and alarming explanation for the increase in child poverty, David Pichaud concludes, is the rise in unemployment.

The number of children with unemployed fathers rose from 420,000 to 1,200,000 between 1973 and 1983. One-ninth of all children in Britain are in families of the unemployed, a far higher proportion than in most other industrialized countries.

Poor Children: A Tale of Two Decades, £1.50 from CPAG, 1 Macklin Street, London WC2B 5NH.

Innocent victims of the 'children in care' stigma

Children in local authority care often feel that they are ostracized at school and treated differently by staff.

The vast majority are in care through no fault of their own. Most of them are from large families or single-parent families and many of their parents are unemployed.

But in a new National Children's Bureau publication aimed at trainee teachers, one young contributor is quoted as saying: "It seems to me that everybody's got this impression. If you're a 'homeless' kid you've done something wrong. When I went to school there was a music teacher and these were his very words: 'You're all the bloody same you lot!'"

Mrs Diana Gamble is the author of the booklet. She has written it to provide more information on children who come into care and it has been welcomed by teacher trainers.

Mrs Gamble finds she is much in demand as a lecturer. Colleagues, she says, see that this is an area they need to cover.

"Teachers can best help," she says.

"by being aware that these children are very little different from others and that they have come into care through a series of accidents."

But, she stresses, teachers do need to be careful about the kind of essay subjects they set or about the way dinner money is collected. "What we are trying to do is to give these children as normal a life as possible. Anything that sets them aside hinders this."

Her booklet suggests that schools have an important part to play when a child appears before a juvenile court. It is normally assumed that the two main parties involved in care orders are the social workers and the bench. Research findings suggest that schools and headteachers might also play a major part in the process.

A bad report from the school, or a head's reluctance to keep the offender at school, might well lead to a residential placement for the child.

Children in Care Today, 43p (inc. postage) from Mrs Diana Gamble, 70 Village Road, Chilton Village, Nottingham NG11 8NE.

O Come all ye faithful

"Good Christian men rejoice / With heart and soul and voice" goes the carol. As term ends and Christmas anticipation reaches fever pitch, art, music, dance and drama specialists - and anyone else showing enthusiasm for the showbiz side of education - pool resources for the annual spectacular. Rejoicing there is in plenty as staff and pupils see the culmination of weeks or months of preparation. Not all of it is Christian, of course. There is still plenty of life in the traditional primary school Nativity with its shepherds in ten-towel headgear, angels in tinsel halos and china dolly Jesus. But the old story, the reason for all the celebration, may turn up as a post-Jesus Christ, Superstar rock musical. And there are all kinds of other shows and concerts: adaptations of seasonal favourites like ghost stories or *The Little Matchgirl* or, best of all since this happens so rarely in professional theatre for children, completely homegrown shows involving hundreds of characters and various cultural influences.



The Little Match Girl at Charlton Manor Junior School, south London.



An angel provides some clear directions for the shepherds in the Nativity play at John Carrie nursery school in Birmingham.



Burnwood School in Tooting Bec, London presented an original musical, Alpha Bottleship, involving 200 first-year girls in art, drama, dance and music.



Cinderella at Blyth School for Special Children was all their own work.



Brighthelm schools' Christmas concert raised money for Oxfam's India Project.



Bridgnorth Endowed School in Shropshire presented a home-grown rock Nativity, Shining Wonder, involving 120 pupils.



The Dracula Spectacula caused shivers at Stradbroke School, Suffolk.



Father Christmas visited the West London Tamil school, Greenford.

12 companies gain licence to train from MSC

Twelve companies now have an official licence to train. They are the first YTS trainers to be awarded "approved training organization" status by the Manpower Services Commission.

From next April, anyone who wants to continue to manage YTS schemes will have to get this approval. It means meeting apparently stringent requirements for staffing, training programmes, premises, financial and other resources, assessment and monitoring, health and safety, and equal opportunities.

Nearly 3,250 organizations - almost all of those at present running managing agencies for the YTS - have applied, and local MSC staffs have already begun scrutinizing more than two-thirds of them.

Those that do not come up to scratch will be given a limited period to put matters right.

The power to approve an organization rests with the MSC regional training directors, although there is a right of appeal against refusal to the Commission's chairman.

MSC officials accept as inevitable - although they do not admit it publicly - that the need to get the majority of the companies through the test in order to keep the YTS running will mean interpreting the Commission's criteria liberally.

But within a few weeks, the MSC's own inspectorate, the Training Standards Advisory Service, will begin checking up on the quality of the provision.

About 30 inspectors recruited from education and industrial training are undergoing rigorous instruction in preparation for starting their operations in England and Wales.

In Scotland, the service will use the Scottish Education Department's inspectorate, who are taking over the responsibility early in the New Year.

The TSAS is headed by Mr David Tinsley, a former teacher and education officer who was recruited by the Commission to run its huge Open Tech programme.

Although the majority of YTS managing agencies are employers, followed by local authorities and other non-profit seeking agencies, all of the first 12 approved training organizations are commercial private training agencies.

While some of the most effective training is provided by this sector, it is the one the MSC has had to learn to watch closely following the collapse of a number of agencies, who have to work on very tight margins.

At a ceremony next month, Mr Bryan Nicholson, the MSC's chairman, will present plaques to this first group to qualify under the new system.



Anyone who wants to continue to manage YTS schemes will have to get approval



David Grugeon: student support

Educators take top posts

The Open College, the television-based open of mass vocational education and adult training due to start next year, is to be run by educators rather than broadcasting professionals.

The key managers, whose appointments were announced last week, all have a solid background in teaching or education administration, as well as any experience of educational broadcasting.

The two top jobs under the director, Ms Sheila Innes, until now the BBC's head of education broadcasting, go to Mr Richard Freeman, executive director of the National Extension College, and David Grugeon, an Open University pre-vice chancellor.

Mr Freeman is credited with turning the NEC from a small correspondence college into a mass institution which is involved in a wide range of Government projects and schemes. He also runs MARIS-NET, the rapidly expanding computerized training information network used heavily by the Manpower Services Commission. As director of courses, Mr Freeman, will be responsible for the content of the Open College programme.

Mr Grugeon, who started his career as a primary teacher and became a teacher trainer, is also a former NEC man. He is responsible for the OU's academic staff and for student services, and will do the same job at the Open College as director of student support.

Dr David Hoyle, who has taught in secondary and higher education will be the commissioning editor for broadcast programmes. He was a producer in the BBC OU unit before switching to a BBC department which makes and sells English as a foreign language television programmes for use abroad.

Mr Jenny Rogers, who will commission other kinds of material, was a further education college lecturer before becoming a producer in the BBC TV continuing education department.

Bungling charge levelled at open learning

Allegations that widespread bungling has endangered the development of open learning are published this week. Colleges, universities, industry and government agencies are accused of contributing to "a catalogue of disasters".

Open learning, which covers a wide variety of arrangements and techniques like home study packages, access and drop-in courses, and the use of advanced educational technologies, is seen by the Government as the best way to raise the standard of the country's workforce.

It has already spent £45 million on the Open Tech, a five-year programme to develop educational materials and ways of running open learning schemes, and has authorized the creation of the world's biggest open learning system, the broadcasting-based Open College.

The criticisms coincide with the Manpower Services Commission's announcement of further steps in setting up the Open College. They are made in the quarterly review of the Institute of Manpower Studies, an influential body of experts whose help is frequently sought by the Commission and other government agencies.

A leading article warns that unless the weaknesses are remedied, Britain will lose its present lead in open learning techniques.

The review says that the providers of open learning have misjudged the needs of industry, which, in turn, has had unreal expectations, and that the MSC failed to manage the first years of the Open Tech programme effectively. It accuses universities and colleges of failing to research the market for open learning properly, and producing courses which were either of no practical significance or aimed at irrelevant qualifications. In many cases, says the review, they showed little commercial acumen and did not produce packages capable of attracting purchasers or further sponsorship.

It also alleges that materials have often been "of such unspeakable tedium and poor quality" that they are a disincentive to learning. Its authors suggest that this is because "most lectures in education are incompetent communications".

The review adds: "It is a fallacy to



David Tinsley: Improvement

believe that experts in a subject are necessarily capable of communicating their knowledge and skills to others. Most lecturers in education, where research is prized above practical achievement, are incompetent communicators and need translators."

It also charges that many colleges used their open learning funding to bolster other activities, and that too much money was wasted on high technology.

But the review says that many in industry have failed to grasp the potential of open learning, seeing it only as a cheap alternative, while some company trainers saw it as "a threat to their sinecures."

The MSC did not employ enough staff on the Open Tech programme to manage it effectively until its later years, says the review, and political rivalry within the Commission and with the Department of Education and Science wasted valuable resources. During the past two years of the programme, under the direction of Mr David Tinsley, there had been a considerable improvement, however, and "a solid corpus of excellent training material" had become available.

"Let us hope the providers of training have learned from their mistakes and that the users have developed realistic expectations," the review concludes. "Other countries are now showing considerable interest in the training techniques developed here. If we do not harness them, others will."

Edited by Mark Jackson

Industrial Society conference surprised by attack on education

BAe chief blames schools for nation's poor economy

A spectacular attack on the educational system was made last week by Sir Raymond Lygo, the retired admiral who now heads British Aerospace.

He blamed Britain's parlous economic straits on the abolition of the grammar and technical schools, and called on the Government to take steps to repair the damage.

Sir Raymond, speaking at an Industrial Society conference held to evaluate the results of Industry Year, was pessimistic about the present school system's ability to answer industry's needs.

Gasps of disbelief, both from headteachers and from industrial representatives in the audience, greeted his statement that "it was a great mistake to abolish the grammar schools and technical schools."

He alleged: "Industry is poorly served by the world of education and there are too many second and third-rate graduates doing the work of technicians."

But Sir Raymond (Ilford County High and Clarke's College, Bromley) was dismissive, too, of the independent sector. "We are the inhabitants of a grubby little island off the coast of

Europe, dreaming of Empire and public school," he said.

Mr Kenneth Baker, the Education Secretary, told the conference that the city technology colleges would be a "half-way house" between state education and the private sector.

He compared them with housing associations and other forms of provision which were an alternative to the old divide between council dwelling and private housing.

Mr Baker tried to reassure a secondary head who feared that a CTC planned for his area would compete for resources.

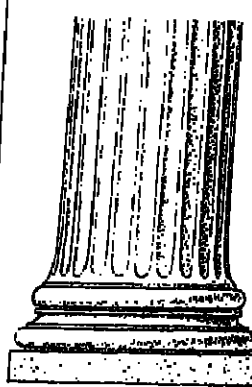
But Mr Robin Chambers, head of a school in Hackney, East London, pointed out that even if it had no effect on his funding, the CTC would take away his most able pupils and "destroy what I am trying to do."

After the conference, Mr Baker talked privately with the head. Mr Chambers later revealed: "I told him that my pupils were my most important resource, but he just patted me on the shoulder and said he was sure I would manage. I am waiting for him to tell me how."



Robin Chambers: fears CTC would take away most able pupils

Books of the year



We all know what the professional critics read – or claim to read – for pleasure. While other papers echo with the sound of mutual literary backscratches, we publish the selections of a number of key people who wield educational power and/or social influence

Bernard Ashley, children's author and teacher. *Chair of the 1986 Snarles Award.* I have chosen three outstanding books published for children but available to everyone. The constraints under which children's writers work add to the quality of this sort of fiction. These are the sorts of books which remove arbitrary barriers. The first is *Juniper* by Gene Kemp (Faber), a brilliant quirky book with lots happening on the surface, and an interesting study of role reversal beneath. The second, *The Sea is Singing* by Rosalind Kerven (Blackie), is an unusual story from the Shetlands, told in evocative language with a mysterious element within it which leaves room for much further speculation. Jenny Nimmo's *The Snow Spider* (Methuen, Pic Paper), our choice for the Snarles Grand Prix, is a lyrical, magical book, accessible to children of 10 and 11.

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker, MP, Secretary of State for Education and Science

Of the three books which have given me very great pleasure to read in 1986, the first was *The Seeds of Change* by Henry Hobhouse. This was published towards the end of 1985 and charts the effect upon the history of mankind of five plants: quinine, tea, sugar, cotton and the potato. I think it is an important book which opens a whole new way of looking at the broad canvas of history. Mr Hobhouse is a gifted amateur historian who has written his first book at a relatively advanced age. He must be proud that it has been chosen as the centrepiece by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington for its 200th anniversary celebrations in 1991/92. The second book is *A Perfect Spy* by John Le Carré (Hodder and Stoughton). This is now required reading for it is not just a spy thriller, it is an insight into the psychology of the traitor. The third book is not just one but several. It is the seven volumes of *Poems on Affairs of State from 1660 to 1714*. These have been published over a series of years by Yale University and they are a great tribute to American historical scholarship. I have only got round to reading them this last year, but they contain a wealth of fascinating historical knowledge accompanying some of the best satirical poetry in our language from Marvell, Dryden, Defoe, Swift and Pope. It was one of the golden ages for poets who were concerned with public events and the uses of rapier; contemporary satirists use cudgels.

Edward Blahen, writer

The first book is *Gogol's Dead Souls*, based on the funniest idea of any novel and one of the funniest books in the world. It's a great epic of a book, and one that I try to re-read every year. The second is Johnson's *Rasselas* which I have not read for 30 years. I still found it so very sensible and so very sad about human life. If Voltaire hadn't written *Candide* and done it more implicitly, then I'm sure it would be better known. The third book was published this year: *Talkative Man* by R. K. Narayan (Heinemann). I met him for the first time recently on a book programme I do for the World Service, and he said he had found he could not get beyond 112 pages – a complete contrast to *Gogol*. It's a typical Narayan story about a helpless rogue. He's an immensely likeable and wise writer.



Michael Bogdanov, theatre director The one book of the year for a straight-through read was Martin Amis's *Money: a suicide note* (Cape). This was prose of raw power and energy, a frightening vision of the entertainment world. It gave me a headache. *Explorations in a Drunken Landscape: archaeology and history of the Isles of Scilly* by Charles Thomas published by Batsford. This was the book under the bed. A fascinating look at the formation of this wonderful archipelago with a certain amount of Celtic mysticism but for those of us who are Celtic freaks, masterly in its detective work. The other under-the-bed book (red) was *Political Shakespeare: new essays in cultural materialism* edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester University Press).

This is hard lucid incisive stuff putting together ideas of the plays in a form quite alien to the Shakespeare book for some time.

Eric Bolton, Senior Chief Inspector, DES

My first book is *Thomas More* by Richard Marius (Dent). I have always been interested in More, and have wanted to get behind the adulatory picture of him that various biographies of him have built up. He still survives Richard Marius's investigation. My second is *Ford Maddox Ford's Paradise Lost*. I first read it years ago, and didn't really get on with it. But Penguin brought it together with Rose Macaulay's excellent introduction, and I read it with great pleasure this summer. It gives a picture of what the 1914-18 war really brought to an end. Finally, I enjoyed P. D. James's *A Taste for Death* (Faber). It's such an intriguing and interesting portrait of life in contemporary London. So many issues trot across its pages in rather unselfconscious ways.

Robert Burchfield, editor of the Oxford English Dictionary

The most instructive piece of fiction that I have read this year is Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist* (Cape), a chilling description of the forces of evil lying about in our society. David Crystal's *Listen to Your Child* (Penguin), has instruction and entertainment nicely blended. Johnson's *Dictionary and the Language of Learning* by Robert DeMaria Jr (OUP) brilliantly elucidates the encyclopedic content of the second most famous English dictionary. In seeing a dictionary as a disguised encyclopedia he is following the tradition of Umberto Eco without falling back on the prolixity of Eco's dusty language.

Farrukh Dhondy, commissioning editor of multi-racial programmes, Channel 4, and writer for teenagers

The first is *An Insular Possession* by Timothy Mo (Chatto). Why? It's just a book I'm jealous of. It begins to do the essential work of non-writers in Britain. The second is *The Golden Gate* by Vikram Seth (Faber). I'm not interested in yuppies, but it kept me interested. It's really a hell of a thing. Finally, the collected cricket writings of C. L. R. James (*Cricketer*, Allison & Busby). I'm a writing fan, not a cricket fan. I know as much about cricket as I do about bullfighting and I found it as fascinating as *Death in the Afternoon*.

Jonathan Dimbleby, broadcaster

I took *A Taste for Death* (Faber) on holiday, knowing it would be a high-class thriller. But P. D. James has written a complex novel in beautifully precise prose – economical, rich in insights and filled with humanity. A treat. In *The Good Terrorist*, (Cape) Doris Lessing is at her merciless best. A rag-bag of discordant revolutionaries live unhappily together in a London squat. Their world oscillates between fantasies of reckless violence and bouts of relentless self-pity. They are lost souls, wayward floaters, but also pitifully vulnerable. So you care about them and thus you read on to the chilling climax. *August 1914* is an epic novel – grand, in scale but intimate in understanding, sweeping in range and detailed in focus. There is unforgivable incompetence at Military Headquarters and awesome courage on the battlefield. Solzhenitsyn's masterpiece is my book of the year.

Dr David Hargreaves, Chief Inspector for ILEA The fascination of the British with the public schools knows no bounds. Geoffrey Walford's *Life in Public Schools* (Methuen), offers a cool appraisal which upsets many stereotypes. Public schools are evidently less insulated against social and educational change than many people imagine. A healthy antidote to the uncritical rhetoric in favour of private education and to that

curious combination of nostalgia and resentment which impels middle-aged ex-public schoolboys to commit their reminiscences to print. *Racism, Education and the State* by Barry Troyna and Jenny Williams (Croom Helm) is a stimulating and provocative review of past policies in the field of multicultural education. This is no bedside book, for the text is hard in places and the typeface has been selected to test all but the most committed reader. But persistence is rewarded with an analysis which promises to move us to the next important stages of theory and practice in what is one of Britain's most important but confused educational issues.

Rod Taylor's *Educating for Art* (Longman), with which I admit a small personal connection, will restore anyone's flagging belief in the immense untapped creative capacities of our pupils. Taylor is less concerned to blame us for what goes wrong than to offer a host of practical and tested ways in which the arts can be made available to us all, both as consumers and as providers of art. This is one of those classics of education that inspires teachers to excellence.

Russell Hoban, writer

The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets compiled by Barbara G. Walker (Harper and Row) is a tremendously interesting compendium which is indispensable on my bookshelf beside Robert Graves. I haven't read the whole of *The Devil's Horsemen: The Mongol Invasion of Europe* by James Chambers (Weidenfeld & Nicolson), but it fills the mind with exciting things. The *H. P. Lovecraft Omnibus* (Graindu) is a collection of the writings of the coldest of America's supernatural writers who fell into obscurity but has now been revived.

Geoffrey Holland, Director, Manpower Services Commission

My first choice is Correlli Barnett's *The Audit of War* (Macmillan) – a definitive and readable demonstration that our education and training systems and industrial and commercial performance never were the envy of the world and that the illusion that they have been (or are) lies at the heart of our long decline. My second is John Le Carré's *A Perfect Spy* (Hodder and Stoughton) the best yet from one of the greatest novelists of today who continues to lay bare the anatomy of that decline through the metaphor of the world of espionage, illusion and disillusion. And finally Wendy Cope's *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis* (Faber), a clutch of poems which are accessible, rewarding and immense fun yet professional and crafted through and through. Would that every teacher, trainer and administrator would heed the example.

Ray Honeyford, former headmaster

I came across a marvellous book of Bernard Levin's journalism this year: *Speaking Up* (Cape). I admire him enormously – I always have. He combines a concern for the underdog with a scepticism about fashionable nostrums. He is also a wonderful stylist. I think he's our most gifted journalist. I also re-read *The Harpelle Report* by J. L. Carr (Penguin). It's the funniest book ever written about schools, and also the wisest. Finally, I belatedly read *Hotel Du Lac* (Cape). It's a wonderful evocation of a genuine romance. I don't know anyone who can analyse the reality of genuine sexual relations as Anita Brookner can. She too is a marvellous stylist, and she also has such a civilized mind.

Fred Jarvis, General Secretary of the NUT

It's not been a year for settling down for a "good read" – too often at best, I only have time to dip in here and there. However, one book I couldn't put down, and which was a sheer delight, was *Views from a Branch Farmhouse* (Pavilion). About the area of Provence I love, it combines

quite superb, poetic photography by Carey Mose with a lyrical text by her father, Julian Mose. Skipping through the latest Dick Francis was possible, but another book which can almost be classed as a "thriller" that I also read was *The End of the Street*, by Linda Melvern (Methuen), compulsive as well as compulsory reading for any member of the TUC General Council. And while I didn't get much further into my volumes of Proust, I did finish another substantial work – *The Kennedys* by Peter Collier and David Horowitz (Pan). The Kennedys may not have had the same life-style as Marcel, but this well-researched account is just as fascinating to read.

Terry Jones, writer and ex-Monty Python

I spent the whole summer holiday totally immersed in *Barchester Towers* and reading bits out to my 10-year-old son. The Penguin edition has a wonderful introduction by J. K. Galbraith who says he envies the reader coming to Trollope for the first time – he has such a treat in store. I couldn't agree more. For my second choice, I also really cherish the facsimile of the 1936 *Rupert Annual* produced by the *Daily Express* – beautifully done, faithfully reproduced. My third choice I have not read right through. It's *The New Testament in Scots* by William Laughton Lorimer (Penguin), and it's a delightful thing to read.

Glenys Kinnoch, primary school teacher and Chair of One World

This year's reading has mainly been about development issues, and the launch of One World has meant all spare moments have been filled with craving information on such concerns as debt, multi-nationals, commodity markets, and environmental degradation.

There has been some time for lighter reading. Recently I enjoyed *Rapinzel's Revenge* (Attic Press compilation) which is a humorous and feminist look at children's fairy tales. Snow White organizes the seven dwarfs into a trade union and Cinderella's prince is nothing but a foot fetishist. I have just finished Fay Weldon's *The Shrapnel Academy* (Hodder and Stoughton) in which she is as usual funny, topical and disturbing. *Ayaa, Lacari and Princess*, by Rozina Visram, is the history of Indians in Britain between 1700 and 1947. It is the story of ordinary people and, as Salman Rushdie commented, it is about the "realities of imperialism".



Adrian Mitchell, poet

My first is *The Struggle Is My Life* by Nelson Mandela, especially for the 1955 Call to the Congress. My second is *The People of Providence* by Tony Parker: a documentary about a housing estate – another astonishing book from one of our most creative writers. My third is *Doing the Voices* by Jeremy Brooks. New stories by one of our finest writers of fiction.

Frances Morrell, Leader of ILEA

I like books which liberate the intelligence by dealing with the real society we inhabit rather than lunging about in the intellectual fog of conventional wisdom. For those who take the same view I recommend: *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* by Norman Dixon (Futura), a brilliant and amusing study of how military organization is institutionally arranged to produce incompetent generals. *Women Who Love Too Much* by Robin Norwood (Arrow) is a revolutionary text for any woman who ever believed, from the age of 17, that romantic love was the key to happiness in life. Duncan Campbell's *The Unlikely Aircraft Carrier* (Pavilion) is a guide to American military power in Britain which no one with an intelligent interest in politics can do without. When reality becomes too much, then of course Asimov's *Robots and Empire* could be one way to ignore the television on Christmas Day.

Scaling the Pooh-mountain

Frances Farrer on the industry built upon a bear



In English universities there are still Pooh societies that hold Pooh parties. These are not simply a question of dressing up like the characters and having a rave, but meetings where people gather round a table, pass a pot of honey, and read the stories to each other. Some of them even read in the punctuation. Such fun!

The American fascination with Pooh, aside from the Disney and merchandizing angle, tends towards a more mature appreciation. There are these and much more adult books: *Pooh's Workout Book* is the latest. *The Tao of Pooh* is a few years old, while *The Pooh Perplex* is still in print 20-odd years after publication. The Latin translations, however, were of English origin (*Winnie ille Pu: Domus Anguli Puenis*), as was Brian Sibley's *The Pooh Sketchbook*, featuring Shepard's preparatory drawings.

Pooh and his many satellite industries are thriving; the great fuss that was made of his 60th birthday in October provided evidence of his massive popularity. There were talks and tea parties, articles and radio interviews of greater and lesser seriousness. Commercial stations referred to Pooh's OAP bus pass while the BBC did a piece featuring Dr John Rae, Brian Sibley and William Rushton. "Some of the finest characters in English literature," said Mr Sibley, comparing them with those of Dickens and Shakespeare. "Deeply bourgeois," said William Rushton approvingly, while Dr Rae spoke of "literary imperialism".

The adult interest in Pooh, rooted in nostalgia and realized with tongues far into cheeks, is still very profitable for booksellers. The *Workout Book* currently features on the bestseller lists. You have to decide whether your body type is closest to Pooh, Piglet or Tigger. If it's Piglet you are asked to jump and squeak, or blow dandelions. *The Pooh Sketchbook* is selling well and Sibley as a major Poohspert.

The Tao of Pooh (more than 15,000 copies a year on the home market) considers the Bear to be the embodiment of "non-doing", and Cottleston Pie as a seminal statement of Tao-ism. Japanese and Dutch are two of the five languages in which the book is available. Meanwhile *Winnie ille Pu* and *Domus Anguli Puenis*, though thought by the publishers to be only rarely used in schools, still bring home the pots of honey.

Of all the spinoff books for adults – excluding recipe books, calendars and so on – the one Methuen didn't publish, *The Pooh Perplex* by Frederick C. Crews (sic) remains the strongest cult book for undergraduates, selling around 2,500 copies a year 20 years after its original publication. Chapter headings include "The Theory and Practice of Bardic Verse: Notations on the Hums of Pooh"; "The Style of Pooh: Sources, Analogues and Influences"; and "A Bourgeois Writer's Proletarian Fables", in which it is noted that Pooh is trapped by Rabbit and "exploited as an unsalaried towel rack for an entire week".

Sympathy for Pooh varies, however. In "the Imperialistic venture of bringing back a live Heffalump... Pooh has been too loyal to his leisure-class environment [and] has consumed most of the capital en route". Why so much serious attention for the bear of very little brain? Other bears don't get it, other animal characters don't. "Beatrix Potter wrote about real animals, Milne wrote about animals as people," said Philip Scott at Pooh's birthday party at London Zoo. Mr Scott is a senior lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies and, like many others, talks about the "depth" of the characters. This is not easy to understand, for while they all have humour, they all conform to

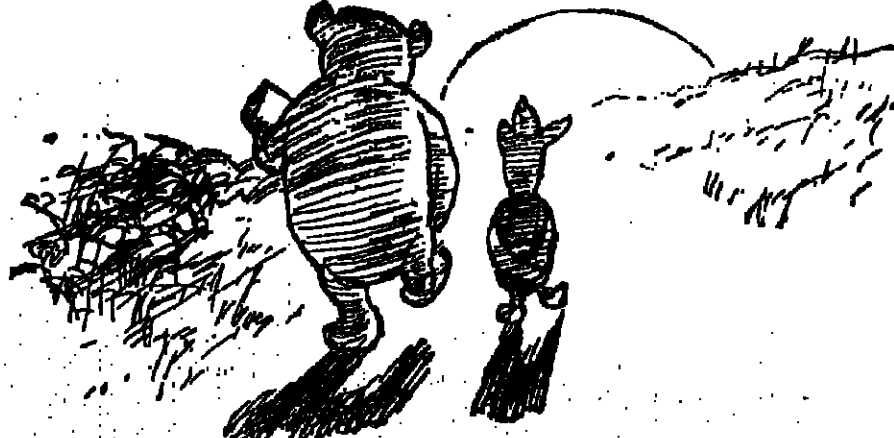
their types at all times. Pooh's plonking common sense and Piglet's anxiety never leave them except when they're called upon to act bravely; then some truly British courage is available for Piglet to be hauled up into Owl's letter box, or for Pooh to go boating on his honey jar. Owl is always pedantic, Eeyore always depressed. Multi-dimensional they aren't.

The American interest is perhaps even more perplexing since Pooh is so relentlessly English, and southern English at that. "Milne was writing about the Sussex Weald, rural England, not suburban. One of the greatest Anglo-Saxon settlements, the land of the charcoal-burners. It goes back a long way," said Mr Scott. Pooh as charcoal-burner, good heavens. But "The Americans add their own layers of interpretation," said Joy Backhouse of Methuen. "They like Pooh's English common sense, with all our failings." Pooh, the great bumbler, good-natured, not intellectual, practical, humorous, happy with friends and honey (though not necessarily in that order) maybe epitomizes Reaganite middle America? Though with the American zeal for breaking with the old world it seems odd that they haven't come up with a bear of their own.

Christopher Falkus of Methuen suggests that the world's most famous bear's greatest characteristic is its shared preoccupation between adults and the nursery. If anyone produces a set of characters as strong as that it lends itself to philosophy. Shared between adults and the nursery, or are we all seriously regressed? Is it simply that the fantasy world of nannies and mummies is much too comforting to give up?

Whatever the reason, Pooh is good business. On the home market alone, basic texts steadily sell about 60,000 paperback copies a year, with 250,000 hardback copies sold during the past 10 years. Pooh's interests are protected not only by his publishers but also by the Pooh Trust, which represents copyright holders and beneficiaries. The Trust receives ideas for veiling and turns many down as inappropriate to the essence of Pooh. They don't interfere with Americanizations, however, which seems a great shame. Piglet talking about pushing himself "right to the limit" and Pooh suggesting they "go fetch Owl" don't seem Anglo-Saxon Pooh – but they do sell in America.

So there it is, an industry built upon a bear, with academics, editors, publishers, actors, agents, businessmen and journalists all hanging on. And there is Pooh and his friends, whose characters are compared with those created by Dickens and Shakespeare. And Milne, whose writing is said to be "as great as Austen" (Joy Backhouse). And Christopher Robin, who in adulthood is Not Nearly as Hummy about It All as You Might Think. (Of all the Milne archnesses, the relentless capitalizations, currently enjoying a revival, must be among the worst.) Not forgetting Dorothy Parker, who reviewed Pooh in her "Constant Reader" column, concluding "Tonsant Weader Fwowed Up". Quite so.



Victoria Wood, actress and comedian My first is Dennis Norden's *Coming To You Live* (Methuen), a book of reminiscences about the first days of television. It's brilliant; it made me die laughing. Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegone Days* (Faber) also made me die laughing. It's a really good read. My third choice is actually six books: *Spike Milligan's War Memoirs* (Michael Joseph/Penguin). I read them all last week. I'm 33 and people of my generation have had no experience of the war. I'm interested in it; and he's a very funny writer.

Research by Sarah Jane Evans

Split system

Sir - The features written by Mike Leach (TES, October 31) and Christopher Moor (TES, November 7) said from different perspectives almost exactly the same thing: namely, the decrying of excessive emphasis being placed on academic achievement by the education system.

These viewpoints are, of course, not new, and I believe would be supported by the vast majority of teachers. However, the problem, like many others, is simple to formulate but far more difficult to solve.

I must admit to a great deal of sympathy for Christopher Moor's plea for a concentration on the curriculum rather than institutional organization, but quite frankly I don't think it will happen. Changes do occur in a piecemeal fashion; successful experimentation in one region is often adapted for use in another and of course it may take some considerable time before curriculum innovations reach some areas, but this simultaneously encapsulates a strength and weakness of our decentralized system.

I sensed, however, the possibility of a major reduction in the academic/vocational divide with the introduction of GCSE. But this hope appears to have been short-lived. I am not referring to lack of resources, syllabus production or in-service training, but to another issue which may in the long term have far more serious consequences, namely Mode 3, vocational-ly-oriented, courses.

Like Peter Cockerill (TES, November 14), I too have experienced a rejection of Mode 3 syllabus which had been prepared jointly with local schools and the tertiary college in which I work. This was to replace a CSE course in a specialized vocational area applicable to local industrial needs and with GCSE approval I thought we would move a long way towards parity of esteem indicative of tertiary colleges if not of the examination system.

Alas, it was not to be. Because of the attending difficulties who are, now, option but to try for alternative accreditation as Peter Cockerill has done. Unlike him, however, I do not see this as leading to the demise of GCSE boards but perhaps an even more restrictive curriculum for our students, leading to academic GCSE qualifications for the few and records of achievement for the rest.

The problem may also be reflected in GCSE mathematics with, in effect, three examinations of different grading bands replacing the old GCE and CSE which may even lead to a more horrendous split between academic and vocational areas, but that is another story.

In the meantime, let us hope the Review of Vocational Qualifications group will embrace GCSE (and perhaps A level) as a matter of urgency. The alternative seems to be an even more sharply differentiated academic/vocational system.

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Letters should be as brief as possible and typed on one side of the page only. The Editor reserves the right to amend or cut letters where necessary.

Nationality rule

Sir - Like Jeff Taylor ("First-degree murder", TES, October 10), I am an American teacher whose four-year degree has not been recognized by the Burnham Committee.

Having been based on a PGCE course, I issued a DES number and subsequently employed by Sheffield City Council on the strength of my qualifications. I was alarmed that, as far as the Burnham Committee is concerned, these qualifications do not count. The situation is as ludicrous as it is unjust.

However, perhaps even more shocking than the rule itself is the attitude that seems to pervade both the DES and the offices. When I queried my salary assessment with the DES, I was told: "Oh, come on. We all know what American education is like - all those footballers who just slide through the system."

If, as this staffing officer suggests,

Not all heads wish to bow to acts of worship

Sir - The articles by Paul Tonkin and W Owen Cole (Extra, TES, December 12) highlight the dilemma of teachers and headteachers for whom acts of worship in school are hypocritical.

It is unfair to make worship compulsory for teachers and children. As Paul Tonkin argued so cogently, we are not Christians and other theistic and non-theistic traditions make a nonsense of any kind of worship unless the participants are all of one faith.

The only hope of changing the legal position is for those individuals and associations which have thought through the arguments to speak out as often as possible. Most politicians and others who pontificate about the '44 Act have no idea of what it is like to have to live daily with this impossible situation.

Either one ignores the Act - with the threat of litigation - or, as Owen Cole rightly points out, starts the day "with a divisive activity".

R J TUTTON
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Preach or teach

Sir - I pick up my pen to reply to William Kay's article in the TES of December 12 shortly after hearing a radio news item about a New York vicar who has allegedly distressed young children by telling them that there is no Father Christmas!

The gaudiness of clergy in schools (with notable exceptions) is well known. It is astonishing that William Kay should advocate that they, together with nuns, rabbis and others, should be let loose in our schools. He must know that one of the reasons for the failure of Sunday schools and similar institutions to keep young people is their educational inadequacy when children compare their methods with those experienced in school. Let these people visit, but to be

used as RE resources, not as teachers. Do we really want our schools to become happy hunting grounds (or miserable ones) for clergy to preach to captive audiences - the children they cannot attract to the church or Sunday school? And what happens to the hundreds of pupils, black as well as white, of many faith backgrounds, who will be withdrawn?

However, the main comment must be that Dr Kay has missed the point altogether. In his interesting but flawed survey of RE, he failed to mention that the vast majority of those involved in teaching the subject have rejected the nurturing, evangelizing motive.

They believe that the aim should be to understand the place of religion in the lives of individuals and societies. This involves examining what it means to be committed to a religious or other life stance, but it does not pre-suppose that the child has one or invite him/her to adopt one.

This most important curriculum development in the approach to RE, mentioned frequently in the aims listed in agreed syllabuses, Dr Kay chooses to ignore. His article is misleading, his solution irrelevant and absurd. The future of RE is as an integral and justified part of a core curriculum grounded on the same educational grounds as other subjects, and taught by qualified and trained teachers.

W OWEN COLE
Head of religious studies
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The Burnham Committee makes its policies on the basis of a handful of wrong. The Burnham Committee knows nothing about my degree. They have done no research, they have asked no questions. Yet, because it is American, it is unacceptable.

It appears that the Burnham Committee has made a regulation which determines a teacher's salary on the basis of nationality. No consideration has been given to my educational qualifications or aptitude.

I am therefore employed at a lower salary than my English colleagues on the grounds of my race/nationality alone. How is this compatible with the Race Relations Act and why is it tolerated? It is amazing that employers and unions alike have condoned such blatant discrimination.

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Trainees in IT

Sir - The article "Micro training attacked over narrow approach" (TES, December 5) in which Mr Mike Nichol, director of education for the Wirral, criticized the work of information technology centres, in particular those on Merseyside, gave a misleading picture of ITCEs' achievements in training young people in the new skills.

At most ITCEs, modern office skills are studied by only a third of their youth trainees, and their training includes not only word processing but also use of computer databases, spreadsheets and accounts systems. The remaining two-thirds of our trainees study either electronics or computer programming.

The problem ITCEs do face, however, (and this is ignored by Mr Nichol) is the low demand from employers for youngsters with electronics and computer programming skills. Across the Merseyside region, ITCEs have achieved the excellent average job placement rate of over 80 per cent, but this is boosted by almost 100 per cent placement of youngsters studying modern office skills, compared with only 65-70 per cent placement of youngsters with the electronics and computing skills.

I know that other ITCE managers, like myself, are concerned about this problem which I see as a reflection of

the decline in the manufacturing and heavy industries alongside an increase in the service sector. The fault does not lie with ITCEs, however, who have to produce youngsters with the skills demanded by industry, because at the end of the day it is jobs that youngsters want, and it is high job placement figures which the government demands of ITCEs.

It would help if company managers were more aware of the many uses to which computers can be put, and if more of them would be prepared to recruit non-graduates as trainee-programmers or electronics engineers, because the time taken to perfect these skills goes beyond the two-year training available under the Youth Training Scheme.

Some form of company sponsorship scheme for the young people coming out of ITCEs with the basic skills and ability in the new technology would, in the long-term, provide a far larger pool of well-qualified young personnel capable of taking our industry and economy into the 21st century.

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PAT nominee

Sir - The report that the Secondary Examinations Council has invited eight teacher associations to nominate representatives for a new advisory committee (TES, December 5) got the right number of unions - eight - but only listed seven. The one omitted was the Professional Association of Teachers.

In fact, PAT has already written to Sir Wilfred Cockcroft with the name of its representative. This will be Dr Roger Taylor, who already represents the Association on the London and East Anglian Group Council.

JOHN R ANDREWS
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FE praise

Sir - All further education colleges have been under attack, so I thought perhaps the recent speech by the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, Mr J Parkes, would be of interest. He was speaking at the annual conference of the Association of Education and the following tribute to Northern Ireland's 26 colleges of Further Education:

"I am constantly impressed by their adaptability, their ability to cater for very large numbers at all levels in an enormous variety of subjects; I am impressed by their willingness to experience of constant change; most of all, I am impressed by the fact that a further education college gets on with their work quietly, without complaint, with a minimum of publicity."

BILL LOWRY
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seems to be confusion over points totals. Two AS levels do not equal one A level - for some university departments are set to insist upon A level passes in the "main" subjects, with AS levels announced that it prefers AS with A levels, rather than just accepting them. What is more, the candidate taking two A plus two AS levels has to jump - and one more to colleagues.

I am far from convinced, too, that the syllabuses so far available can be both complementary and contrasting. Take AS level physics: the aptitude and needs here of two students, one doing A level mathematics and computer science, another English and history, that most gifted linguists or doings full A levels in these subjects, are likely to produce AS level sets of a worthwhile mix.

The principle of breadth which underlies the AS level idea is entirely laudable. But they are a depressingly unimaginative response to what is needed. Many (most) A levels remain an anachronistic, content-defined university entrance examination for a small academic minority going on to read for degrees designed by research academics. What we need is the Secondary Examinations Council (radical I hope) review of A level - not half of more of the same. Educational needs have changed. An integrated, modular, incremental system of qualifications 16-19, encompassing academic and vocational elements, flexible for individual need - that is the vision which many of us share.

Seen in this context, AS levels are at best an unfortunate aberration.

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What to expect from a backward looking offer

Sir - Kenneth Baker proposes a return to almost the same conditions operating in English education under the 1882 Revised Code. "Payment by Results" would remain the fundamental philosophical strand. In his desire to hand power to governing bodies and restore to them the power of "hire and fire", while retaining central control over costs and setting attainment standards by age, perhaps he should inform them of some of the outcomes.

1 Teachers neglected the able children while trying to advance the dull.
2 Administrative falsification occurred on a scale never seen since.
3 Children were kept down until they cleared all the academic targets each year. This remains a feature of the new-favoured German system and is no doubt a feature of West Germany's notoriety in terms of pupil suicide and psychological stress.

4 Classes became larger; the supply of quality teachers declined.
5 The strain on children and staff severely affected health, especially in efforts to secure the attendance grant while Mr Baker may not propose such a qualification for resources, it is a clear example of the pressure that builds within such a system and the

illiberal devices developed to cope. 6 The climate within schools became hostile, between schools and inspectors, and generally there was little spirit of co-operation. Inspections were seen as "one-off" performances when artificial conditions were established in schools merely to try to impress.

7 The examination system encouraged a heavy reliance on rote learning, something discredited by inspectors and the composers of major reports throughout the history of English education, not least in mathematics. 8 The examinations were restricted to the three Rs largely, inducing a wilful neglect of the rest of the curriculum. If Mr Baker is concerned to apply this artificial, if populist rigour, to the whole curriculum, the pressure on all concerned would appropriately multiply.

9 What the historians described as a pathetic belief in examinations developed. Mr Baker depends in such thinking, whatever his actual motivations, upon the ignorance of the lay public of professional arguments for particular educational practices. The assumption that there is ever anything like a standard child able to perform to a



An Inspector calls in 1871: 'little spirit of co-operation'

given target at a given moment in time has long been discredited in professional knowledge of child development.

What can be learned as opposed to what may be deemed desirable to learn, is a more crucial concept. The 11-plus examination represented the last Baker-style foray into attainment testing and remains discredited even in the public mind, for there were always too many losers. The blame for failure could largely be placed on the children, but Mr Baker will want parents to blame it on the teachers, just as false a basis for educational reflection.

Everything we know about education tells us that it is a randomly progressive process in which performance must be variable, and provision flexible. The younger the child, the

more this is true. Thus, the Victorians rapidly abolished the tests for infants. But nor is it an age when performance may reliably be assessed.

Mr Baker's proposals are a prescription for strife. The profession will remain unconvinced by a retreat to such Victorian ideology. Teachers will be set against parents as children inevitably fall targets. Teaching will become robotized, mechanically directed solely to the passing of the tests. Mr Baker's proper concern for the affective faculties will mean nothing, since these are less readily tested and the practices that develop them are already regarded in more ignorant lay perceptions as unnecessary. The very healthy developments made in recent years towards all-round partnership in the provision of education

and the reduction of illogical barriers to learning will be undermined. Moreover, Parliament and the nation will be deeply divided, reducing this vital educational argument to the same swings of the electoral pendulum that have for so long vitiated the reasonable hope of secure long-term strategy over competitors enjoy.

Nowhere is the political spectrum so wide as here, and it is the single greatest cause of our consistently inferior national performance in so many spheres. In setting nations against local government, it opens up a new form of class warfare, when class of one kind or another and the divisions thereby perpetuated in attitude and response also reduce national performance.

Effectively, Mr Baker seeks to undo decades of social and constitutional practice as well. Will all this not prove just as damaging to children in its enduring effects as the anguish of the past two years which at least has now brought near consensus among employers and teachers alike? Government parsimony now prevents an agreement capable of uniting the education profession as never before.

Mr Baker would do better to direct national resources towards the spreading of the great range of excellent practice that exists in this country and that recognizes contemporary knowledge and need, if he really wants overall standards to improve. His approach would disown such excellence.

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Parent partners

Sir - In response to Jeremy Sutcliffe's "Taylor-made for the future" (TES, November 28) I endorse the statement that "paradoxically, greater parental involvement requires extra training".

I am involved in an action research project looking at the issue of parents in the further education of students with special needs (severe and moderate learning difficulties).

Given that my work is a response to a Warnock Report's recommendation for collaboration between parents and professionals as opposed to greater emphasis towards parent governors, there would seem to be many similarities between the findings of this project and the action described at Stanley county junior school.

By negotiating with parents, and in my case students, staffing levels are stretched to the limit. If parents are to be collaborators and work together with staff in the assessment, design, delivery and recording of the curriculum, there is a need for training and support to be given. The questions are then raised: to whom, by whom and when?

New methods of working require understanding by all concerned, staff included. Staff employed "full-time" have non-contact hours which presumably are for the preparation and marking of students' work; staff employed "part-time" are expected to prepare and mark in their own time.

Can hours be afforded to allow personal tutors to become the intermediaries between college and home, including parent support in curricular matters? If the point of working with parents is to benefit students, then it would be contradictory if supply staff were employed to cover students during the time parents received instruction.

During the implementation of my action research, parents are being offered appropriate opportunities to work in partnership with professionals. This in turn is highlighting the positive aspects of staff and parent attitudes and the benefits of increased communication. Conversely, it reflects the need for resources to enable the changes to become permanent.

I would be interested to hear from anyone in post-16 education of children/students with special needs who has experience of partnership with parents, particularly in curricular design, delivery or recording.

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Maths shortage

Sir - I have been reading with interest and not without some degree of worry an announcement that yet another conference was held last week to discuss ways of alleviating the shortage of mathematics teachers.

I am amused because I recall the way in which a number of mathematics staff in the Department of Teaching Studies of the Polytechnic of North London were allowed (even encouraged) to take "Crombie" in the summer of 1984. The largest and, arguably, the most successful mathematics retraining

course in the country had earlier been closed down on the grounds that, according to the then Secretary of State, Sir Keith Joseph, there was no need for more mathematics teachers.

It had been decided that the Department of Teaching Studies would no longer train or retrain secondary teachers of any subject; such teachers in future would come mainly via the PGCE route.

It would now appear that, as those of us who were involved in the retraining scheme then suspected, the forecast was completely and disastrously

medical profession recognizes that, in organizing a profession, there are many conflicting functions to operate - a fact which Mr Cox does not seem to appreciate.

The doctors have a body which controls their professional status (the General Medical Council) as well as their trade unions (the British Medical Association, and others).

The teaching profession needs the same kind of arrangements. This fact is recognized within the consultative documents, which makes assurances that the functions of a GTC would not clash with union responsibilities on pay and conditions, or interfere in local bargaining and disciplinary procedures agreed with the local

authority employers. What a GTC would do under the proposals is to assume, as a statutory, independent body powers and functions held at present by the Department of Education and Science including recognition, approval of probation and withdrawal of qualified status.

It is only when we have these matters under our own control that we should cease "to continue as the sick joke of the public sector".

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General council

Sir - Jim Cox (TES, Letters, November 14) must really read your pages more carefully. On October 3 James Meikle produced a major article "on a cherished ideal which is making some headway after nearly two decades of discussions - the establishment of a general teaching council for England and Wales".

It explained that representatives of 17 teacher organizations and other interested bodies have agreed a broad framework in a consultative document for setting up a GTC.

However, such a GTC would not negotiate pay and conditions. The

basic skills of sport in a school programme designed to maintain motivation and enthusiasm in all pupils. Self-assessed improvement in fitness (heart-rate) or time over a cross-country or orienteering course is proving highly relevant to present and future needs.

However, none of this militates against support for excellence, team games or winning!

It is simply that for Brian Cox's grandsons the focus has shifted; perhaps he will play for the second local community-based team, fully supported by the school which can provide facilities and pitches. Later, maybe he will join a dance club to improve on skills acquired at a basic level at school.

A healthy change of emphasis has occurred, the glow of achievement is alive and well!

PAT COLLINGS
Head
Sinfon Community School
116 Broughton Road
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The necessary attitudes can only be fostered through an introduction to the

basic skills of sport in a school programme designed to maintain motivation and enthusiasm in all pupils. Self-assessed improvement in fitness (heart-rate) or time over a cross-country or orienteering course is proving highly relevant to present and future needs.

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PAT COLLINGS
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Commercial input

Sir - Jeremy Rowe's Tulkback article on commercial competitions (TES, November 14) is a timely reminder of the area of real conflict between educational and commercial interests. Schools are frequently exhorted to liaise with industry and commerce and give careful consideration to their needs. However, they appear to give little heed to the problems caused by competitions in the education of the full range of pupils.

The problem is further compounded when charitable societies and other worthy causes use competitions in the belief that they will further their cause. Teachers have always encouraged children to become involved with the problems of less fortunate members of the community or issues related to the protection of animals or the natural environment.

Commercial competitions seem to me to be the last resort of unimaginative public relations consultants or ill-informed committees when confronted with the problem of motivating children to respond to their particular issues. Commerce, industry and charitable institutions need to explore two main issues before embarking upon competitive ventures for young children.

First, are competitions an effective method of getting their message across? Some of their money could usefully be employed to research the effectiveness of their campaigns in achieving their objectives. To do this, they would have to identify clearly their objectives and ask if these are valid within the structure of education.

Second, if the main objective is to get children involved with commerce, industry and social issues, are there alternative ways of approaching this problem which may be mutually beneficial?

Teachers would be much more sympathetic if the activity allowed each child to make a contribution at their own level. If the issues are important the involvement should not be limited to those able to meet the often questionable criteria of the judging panel.

Perhaps this is an area where the organizers of commercial competitions should be exhorted to consult with teachers directly involved with the children before embarking on projects of questionable value to both sides.

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Catch them young

Gary Storer

I could be a soldier
And a sailor too;
I'd like to be a keeper
At the public zoo.

This verse from *The Young Puffin Book of Verse*, like much other children's poetry, reflects the popular conception of the child's vocational thinking as based on fantasy. The young child, it is supposed, thinks it can be anything from an astronaut to a train driver to a nurse.

Some academics have suggested a three-stage development of vocational thinking beginning with "fantasy" and progressing through a "tentative" phase to a "realistic" one. Young children, we are told, can know nothing of this real world at least until they have passed that increasingly mythical end of innocence we call puberty.

Adults, looking back at their own sunshine-gold fields of childhood, go out of their way to think of children like this. This leads to an attempt to keep vocational thinking in the supposed fantasy stage. We can borrow David Milner's terms from his book on the development of racial attitudes, *Ten Years On*, and describe this three-pronged attack as consisting of "direct tuition", "indirect tuition" and "role learning".

Direct tuition, rather than coming from teachers, is more likely to come from parents: "When you grow up you'll be a nurse like your mother." "You'll never be practical, you've got it all in your head", or, very commonly, "You won't like that, it's boring." We may as well concede that these remarks will never disappear.

Indirect tuition comes in the form of the falsely projected images of work presented by educationists who won't expose children to the vulgar world too early. So they give them books set on farms where the cows are all known by name and "The Farmer" and "The Farmer's Wife" are the only workers, and television programmes with generalizing labels like "The Factory" or "The Building Site".

The roles they see around them are also internalized by children. To say they have no experience of work, as the fantasy theorists seem to, is wrong.

Every day, every child comes into contact with many forms of work, whether it is the bus conductor, the newsagent or the construction worker on a building site. And then, of course, there are the school occupations: head teacher, teacher, caretaker, cook.

But this daily experience can be very narrow and dangerous if the child knows the local bus conductor to be a middle-aged woman or the caretaker to be a man wearing overalls its concept of those roles can become fixed into those images.

So it is wrong to say that children's thoughts on work are fantastic - they are generally based on the reality around them: the reality of the images in their books, the reality of their parents words and the reality of what they see around them.

Any solution to these problems can only lie in a recognition of the importance of the fact that young children should have an informed view of the world of work.

In 1985, *Careers Bulletin* reported an extended attempt by a Notting Hill primary school to do this. The Fox primary school arranged visits for most of its junior pupils and two infant classes to such commonly stereotyped work places as a hospital, a bank, an engineering works, a hotel, a chain of shops, the Post Office and a firm.

One of the successful outcomes was the development of "children's skills in observing, investigating and evaluating their everyday life". There is, then, general educational gain as well as the benefit to the children's occupational awareness.

This points to another form of "careers education" for young children: its integration into other education projects. If a project on com-

munication is being prepared, why not arrange a visit to a local printer? Vocational education should not be forgotten to discuss attitudes to work.

Because "work" is everywhere, it can be traced in all aspects of education. "Subjects" should not be so segmented that they ignore this.

Even if teachers make no active effort to add to pupils' awareness of the world of work they can explore the pupils' conceptions of work and how they have developed. Self-analysis and awareness are the important keys to the educational chest.

How many careers teachers and careers officers are told by school-leavers, "I haven't really thought about work", or "I don't know anything about that job". Teachers of young children can do no better than listen to a plea that they show their pupils that in fact they are constantly in contact with the world of work and are, in fact, ceaselessly considering it. Don't continue to allow them to wait until it is "too late".

A colleague tells a racist joke about an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman. They break. Do you:

1 Laugh?
2 Apologise to the local authority Equal Opportunity Officer?
3 Tell him?

4 Ask on a full-dress discussion of Unconscious Racism in Us All at the next staff meeting?

As a head teacher with a new choir of governors who has developed a habit of saying in and out of classrooms to get a feel of the place unannounced, do you:

1 Tell them to be on their best behaviour and keep changing the wall displays?
2 Urge them to be on their best behaviour and keep changing the wall displays?

3 Urge them to be on their best behaviour and keep changing the wall displays?
4 Urge them to be on their best behaviour and keep changing the wall displays?

5 Urge them to be on their best behaviour and keep changing the wall displays?
6 Urge them to be on their best behaviour and keep changing the wall displays?

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The cult of the buzzword

Peter Felgett attacks the slack thinking behind the search for 'relevance' in education



'The future lies with those who have grasped the fundamentals which underlie not only what society happens to be obsessed with at the moment but which will remain applicable to new circumstances'

After the 1939-45 war, Melanesia suffered an intense wave of cargo cults, the recurrent social delusion first noted in the 19th century, and triggered when a simple society encounters one that is wealthy and industrialized. Such cults may take various forms, but typically their adherents believe that spirits are creating material goods such as aeroplanes, washing machines and motor cars for them. But, they believe, this "cargo" is being falsely appropriated by the more highly developed nations who only pretend to manufacture these goods.

The "cargo", it is believed, will only reach its rightful destination when certain ritualistic and magical conditions are fulfilled. These typically involve a complete reversal of the present order of society and giving up all existing means of subsistence such as animal and crop husbandry. Only when the society has thus demonstrated its confidence in the supernatural does it become worthy to receive cargo. The eventual failure of the miracle is, of course, always blamed on some people having retained food, tools or animals as an insurance.

These cargo cults may seem strange aberrations of superstitious and primitive peoples, with no relevance to a rational educated society. But consider our attitude to computers and computing. In speech after speech, and in one newspaper report after another, the impression is given that if every pupil in our schools had access to a computer, then the golden age of education and prosperity would dawn.

Such assumptions have all the hallmarks of a cargo cult. Wealth is supposed to come not by rational and understood causal processes, but in some automatic manner which is logically indistinguishable from magic. Moreover, there is an obvious element of envy of more wealthy countries which are assumed to have better provision of high-technology equipment in their schools.

Of course, in modern society it is useful for children to acquire keyboard-skills. But computers are no holy grail, just a tool to be picked up when appropriate for the purpose in hand, and laid down again when not needed. They are good or bad according to how they are used.

Similar notions are endemic in society generally, and inevitably influence education. A couple of years or so ago the fashionable word was "microprocessor". As with the "open sesame" of the Arabian Nights, uttering this magic word would secure a bank-loan for anyone setting-up a business, despite the fact that at the time two or three British firms concerned with micro-processors were going bankrupt every week. It was also effective (or, at least, its omission fatal) in securing grants for research. One research council gave as its reason for preferring one application the emphasis placed on the use of a microprocessor; the extra irony is that the rejected rival application involved an array of less new to such devices he had not thought to emphasize the fact.

Similarly, British industry is supposed to lag behind its competitors through lack of "robots". One car maker found it was losing prestige because it had not used the word "robot" to describe its automatic transfer machinery where-as a competitor using exactly the same equipment had done so. Much is heard of "CAD-CAM". The initial ambiguity here is that CAD may stand for computer-aided design or merely computer-aided drawing. Computer-aided manufacture is neither new nor revolutionary; it was implemented in D T Williamson's System 24 as long ago as 1967. Indeed, this anticipated what are now called Flexible Manufacturing Systems, and seen as the successor to robots.

Perhaps the most fashionable word at present is "Information Technology" or "IT". What is usually meant by this is not information technology as such, but only a small subset of it, often little more than computer usage at quite a low level. In its true sense, information technology means everything from the collection of data by instrumentation or human input, to the useful application of the resulting information to control processes or influence human actions, and everything in between including communication, stor-

age and processing. So poor has been the understanding of the fundamentals of information technology that few if any of the courses set up by the Science and Engineering Research Council in its "IT Initiative" had any thorough-going treatment of information theory or even of telecommunications.

The up-and-coming phrase is "artificial intelligence". In fact Norbert Wiener and the other pioneers of cybernetics around 1950 learnt, for reasons that are now well-understood, that it is much more difficult than they had supposed to make a machine emulate the intelligence of human beings, or even lower animals. So-called "Intelligent Knowledge-based Expert Systems" are indeed knowledge-based in the sense that they contain (and can be no better than) a database inserted by human hand, but so far from exhibiting intelligence they are capable only of logical comparisons and tree-searches; whether this makes them "expert" is debatable.

The common thread running through these examples is that prestige is attached to the name in isolation from the true meaning which it should represent, thus degrading the name to a mere buzzword existing in a Lewis Carroll world that is only a topsy-turvy reflection of reality.

To call something a "programmable articulated mechanical manipulator" is rather a mouthful, but at least shows when it may be useful and what its limitations are likely to be; but call it a "robot" and all sorts of anthropomorphic associations enter to obscure clear thought. Similarly "expert systems" are indeed useful in suitable circumstances, but do nothing that could not in principle be done with an index of edge-punched cards; the real advantage is that electronic speeds make practicable what might otherwise not be so, but there is no mystery about it.

Slack cargo cult thinking has in recent years tended to condemn education to pursue, if not strange gods, at least moving buzzword targets of only ephemeral value. The computer cult has resulted in pupils going up to university with computer A levels only to fail because their mathematical knowledge is inadequate. The electronics cult has sent us applicants who have "done feedback", meaning that they can quote, without knowing how to derive it, the formula for the amplification of a simple virtual-earth configuration (minus sign usually omitted); but they cannot quote or discuss Newton's Laws of Motion, or the laws of conservation of mass, momentum and energy. Many have no idea what a derivative or an integral actually are, or how to derive from them first principles, but can merely quote by rote formulae for the derivatives or integrals of well-known functions.

Great stress is being placed today on "relevance" and "training", forgetting that those who can merely follow the procedures in which they have been trained are at hazard in a changing world. The future, including future employability, lies with those who have grasped the fundamentals which underlie not only what society happens to be obsessed with at the moment, but which will remain relevant and applicable in new circumstances.

Education in the fundamentals of language, mathematics and science is essential to flexibility; a narrow training in today's methods is not only poor education, but in the long run poor training also. Moreover, it is essential to include the grammar of language, the technique of mathematical manipulation, and the sceptical discipline of scientific method. We do not expect pupils to become either creative woodworkers or employable joiners without knowing how to saw, plane or chisel, or how to sharpen tools; we ought not to condemn them to face society in ignorance of its basic techniques or of how to sharpen their minds.

Obviously no single reform will meet the problems we face in education, but perhaps one example may be given. If pupils must depend on pocket calculators, let them be Reverse Polish; to the contrary, this is the easier notation for all but very simple one-line calculations, because you do it in the order you would do it with pencil and paper (for example, put down first number, put down second number, add); and the pupil always controls the course of the calculation, thus avoiding the mindless button-pushing that can happen with so-called "algebraic" calculators. With computers, let pupils be taught Pascal, thus avoiding the bad programming habits that can be engendered by more elementary languages. But first, let pupils learn the use of language: the meaning of a derivative, and the dynamics of a body acted on by a force.

Professor Felgett is head of the department of cybernetics at Reading University.



Nick Baker spells out the attractions of the supreme word game

Like all good stories from The Depression, the story of Scrabble is one of rags to riches - of millions (eventually) made from the flush of one simple idea. In 1948, an unemployed American architect, Alfred Butts, decided to invent a game, without cards or dice. He decided on a word game, influenced, perhaps, by the wildfire popularity of the new crossword some 10 years earlier.

The first Scrabble prototype had lettered tiles on a board. No games manufacturer was interested. Even with a board, there was little scope. Lexico, as it was then named, was a game. So was it, another trial game. Crisscross, its immediate successor, did little better.

Until 1947 that Butts and his friend Lewis had decided on the name Scrabble, and making the game in earnest. Butts' only son to be three cents per game. Forty years on, there are an estimated 50 million sets in use in nearly a dozen languages including Greek and Russian.

Two million British people sit down to play the experts call "social Scrabble" - not as much as championship Scrabble, played in many countries, nor as frivolous as the only-at-home variety.

What Scrabble does best, of course, is cause something to happen. Countless peaceful Christmas have been played by J W Spear and Son (UK manufacturers) as relatives, many who haven't met each other for a year, argue the validity of such like year (the giving birth of sheep or pigs), xyster (a surgical instrument for scraping

bone) and zania (a subtropical American palm tree). Recourse to a dictionary is vital. Serious players use Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary as the Scrabble Bible. The Oxford Concise is unequal to the task, and can fuel rows by its omissions.

Mind you, Scrabble is not a game of chance. Apparently, permutations of six letter words like satire and retain can combine with almost any other seventh letter to form a whole word, and experienced Scrabble players automatically look for them. Since learning this trick, I have always done.

Usefully, The Scrabble Book also tells you how to cheat. A word, here, to the wise. American and Canadian files are still made of wood. Not only does this increase their aesthetic charm, it also means that the grain on the back of significant letters (Q's, Z's etc) can be memorized by the unscrupulous scabbler, in the manner of marked cards.

If you're playing against a blind player, incidentally, don't put the dual purpose braille letters (available from the Royal National Institute for the Blind) in the bag. You opponent can feel them as he or she picks them out. The correct procedure in this case is to lay all the letters face down. Apparently, blind players are just as good as sighted ones, and don't need continually to

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"feel" the board in order to see where to go. They have excellent spatial memories.

Is Scrabble good for you? There's little doubt that it is. Its principles are known internationally, which makes it an excellent tool in the teaching of English as a second language.

Betty Root at the Reading Reading Centre says "It's terribly educational. It helps children to recognize words and it makes them use dictionaries." Betty confesses, though, to a vested interest. She is behind a new Scrabble product, The Little World of Scrabble, a series of story-books that goes with a little set of interlocking letters and characters, aimed at the early learner market. And of course, early learners soon turn into early buyers. The idea, presumably, is "hereditary Scrabble" - parents turning even the

sophisticated level under the auspices of the National Scrabble Club is surprisingly accessible to children. A number of the members of the 1986 national champion team from Pill in Bristol started playing at tournament level when they were 11 years old.

There are also National Tournament level players in the Schools Scrabble competition organised by Save the Children, in which the competitive atmosphere is added to by the fact that players are sponsored for every five points they score. At the moment there are about 40 schools involved (this year they managed to scabble together an impressive £15,000) and Save the Children would welcome more. For details write to Caroline Yardley, Save the Children London area organiser, 27 Lower Common South, Putney, London SW15 1BP.

It was the great Victorian, Lewis Carroll, who anticipated Scrabble. In his diary of 1880 he reflected that "A game might be made of letters to be moved about on a chess board till they form words." However, it is Alfred M Butts, now a sprightly 86 year old, who we (Oscar Hammerstein II, Micky Spillane, the Queen Mother, Vladimir Nabokov and myself, among others) have to thank for the real thing.

Accept no substitute. Other games that link lexicography and lady luck are never as good. And don't ever take the name of Scrabble in vain. Recently, the manufacturers took a devotee of the game to the high court - his offence was merely trying to organize a Scrabble contest with big cash prizes for the winner. The Scrabble name, it was ruled, was not to be associated with big money prizes. National competitors should only take part for the honour of winning. Its image as a family game was to be protected at all costs.

Only one man has made a million or more from Scrabble - inventor, Alfred Butts, who is looking forward to attending the US Scrabble finals in 1987. (Sadly, he hasn't played since his wife died six years ago.) Butts, everyone's ideal of a loveable millionaire philanthropist, gave the little town in upstate New York where he has lived most of his life an appropriate present from his profits. A public library.

SCRABBLOGRAPHY:
The Scrabble Book by Derryn Hinch (Pan) £2.95
The Oxford Guide to Word Games by Tony Augarde (Oxford University Press) £6.95
The Little World of Scrabble by Betty Root (J W Spear) Five books at £1.75
Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary (Chambers) £12.95.



Last month's Save The Children Fund Scrabble finals at Kensington, London.

BOOKS



Eric Deeson

Quote of the year

Eric Church



The pill is usually sweetened with some "easy" ones but then the going gets harder and dictionaries and anthologies are brought into play. This is where Nemo scores because, in the course of the foraging for one quotation or another, you do find the most wonderful things. It is such a painless way of enlarging literary and poetic horizons that it might well be recommended, on this ground alone, to anyone in charge of a literature "set" looking to be stretched. Notwithstanding the warning above, addiction does not, in my experience, attack the

James Jensen

Gerald Haight

Hilary Finch

E.C.

Betty Tadman

Angus Calder's *The People's War*, possibly the best social history to date of Britain 1939-45, has just been reissued by Cape at £18.00.

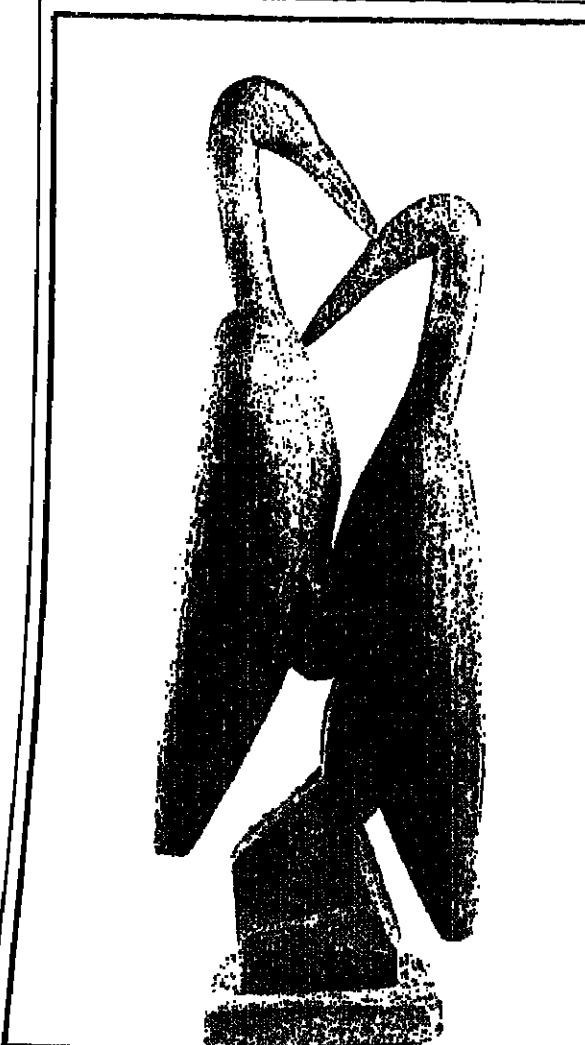
John Sweetman

Hogmanay

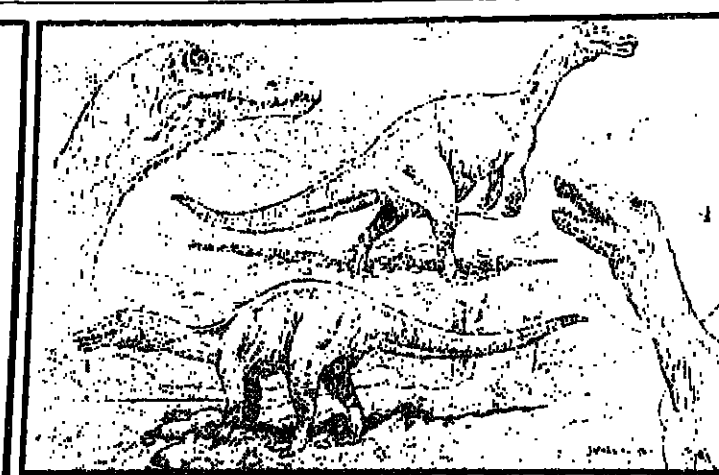
Anyway, a Good New Year to one and all. Slainte!

W S Browne

RESOURCES



Madagascar wool-crafting



"Claws", or *Baryonyx walkeri*, imagined by John Holmes. The only new flesh-eating dinosaur to be discovered this century. Claws was recently introduced to the press at the Natural History Museum. The 124-million-year-old skeleton, discovered in Surrey, will be on display in 1987, when its foot-long claws will rival *Tyrannosaurus rex*'s foot-long teeth in making visitor's flesh creep. The reconstructed animal will stand between 10 and 15 feet tall, and appears to belong to a hitherto unknown species of fish-eating dinosaur, *Baryonychidae* (heavy-clawed ones).

Model leg of *Paracerasaurus*, the largest ever land mammal

Man and beast

Victoria Neumark visits museums of the past and present

Madagascar, Island of the Ancestors Museum of Mankind, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1 Admission free

Who are the Malagasy? The various peoples who live in Madagascar are a mixture of South East Asian, African, Islamic and European races and cultures, which this stunning new exhibition at the Museum of Mankind explores. Lavishly recreated with dioramas, a reconstructed village, fine paintings and carvings, textiles and jewellery, Madagascar blooms in Burlington House like an orchid in Harrods.

The mood is set as you enter the exhibition by two "Travelers' Palms", extraordinary "plants" from whose trunks pure water can be tapped. Between them, rise wooden funerary sculptures, topped by heads - and the odd bus.

David Attenborough provides the voice-over for an ecological display of the island, which, because of its separation from Africa, is home to animals elsewhere extinct: the lemur, sifaka and tenrec (silly like a hedgehog). Orchids bloom in the rain forest, now being eroded by logging; chameleons dart through the trees. Rice and cattle are cultivated in the central plateau. Settlement from Polynesia is most pronounced along the coastal

desert, illustrated by a diorama of a fisherman and his outrigger canoe, which converts at need into a tent for the night.

A paradise feeling grows in visitors to the exhibition as they examine musical instruments to a background of the sounds they play, and see the rich intermingling of motifs and techniques from Asia and Africa on textiles.

This is not simply an exhibition about settlement. Ideas of destiny and geomancy, Islamic-derived, affect the plans of towns and the distinctive square thatched houses. The *sonabe*, "great writings", are revered papyri of traditional wisdom, written in Arab script; ancient rites dictate burial, and re-burial once the corpse has been "purified" of its putrefying soft bits. Funerary sculpture is diverse and beautiful, and women are always shown as larger, on account of their important role in death and rebirth.

Some of these ideas seem to be shared by the 18 ethnic groups who populate the island; much like the art and craft and religion (Islam, Christianity, paganism), is diverse.

Exquisite silver and coral jewellery, banded musket horns and the flashing jewels on a gold crocodile diadem come from the three main kingdoms of 17th-century Madagascar. Lace doilies and white muslim tea-cloths signal the arrival of Christian missionaries. Though the French con-

quered the island in 1896, a reconstructed market stall shows a modern-day shaman plying his wares, and a huge, carved wooden-panel house, built by the Zafimaniry tribe and erected in the museum without a nail or a spot of glue, shows impressive skill. As you peer through the windows at the bed, the hearth, the sacred corner, the bright baskets of the fields and the carved herons of the grave sites, as you wander through a whole village, wooden toys scattered on the ground, you cannot help but sense the vitality, the "rightness" of "native" ways of life in tropical islands, and experience worth hours of classroom time.

A programme of lectures, concerts and study days for teachers is being run by the Museum of Mankind. Information sheets and worksheets will be available. Contact Education Service, 01-437 2224 ext 43. The exhibition catalogue, £4.95, offers invaluable help to teachers, while a lively activity book, *From Aztecs to Zulus* (£1.95), could be used from junior level up.

Discovering Mammals, Part 2 Natural History Museum, London

No more furry creatures frozen in glass cages, zoological labels pinned by their toes. The new display at the Natural History Museum continues

where the vastly popular *Whales and Their Relatives* left off. It shows large herbivores, elephants, hyraxes and the horse family in context with their fossil relatives in convincing dioramas, in interactive games and films, with sound recordings and blow-up photographs to complement the stuffed exhibits. The exhibition should add to the museum's already huge popularity: better go and see it quick before the introduction of admission charges in April.

Instead of the previous dry-as-dust stress on classification, the displays concentrate on detection, conservation and ecology. Thus the display of equids greets the visitor with a game to detect back through the fossil evidence the true ancestor of the horse. The rhino section of the Perissodactyla (odd-footed ones) emphasizes the conservation crisis in the rhino world, and the spread on the tapirs shows how they are adapted to survival, from camouflage on the babies' skin to the braids on the back of the neck which stick in any predator's mouth.

A child can stand dwarfed by the plastic mock-up of the leg of *Paracerasaurus*, the largest land mammal ever to live and children can find out on a weighing-machine how their own weight compares with that of the blue whale, the largest animal to have inhabited the planet.

Hyraxes, the last survivors of an ancient group of mammals, are the

subject of the next section. A film on a "Hyrax City" complements an impressive diorama which details the Hyrax economy. These guinea-pig-like creatures divide off their territory into sleeping, sun-bathing, collecting, browsing, grazing and look-out zones.

In contrast to the resourceful Hyraxes, massive mammals (Proboscidea) or elephants being many people's favourites) need vast resources to survive. As well as a mountain of hay, shown as an elephant's food needs for one day, visitors can delight in picking up a telephone to hear the Asian or African elephant talking, and can test the relative strengths of elephant or deer legs with jointed steel poles.

The Artiodactyla, a large group including giraffes, deer and camels, are imaginatively brought before us. A model, contrasting with man the camel's efficiency in remaining cool in heat and warm in the cold is extremely popular - watch the man collapse! And a video of giraffes is unexpectedly charming beside the towering stuffed specimen. A cartoon film, entitled "A Journey Through Time", shows how this family of mammals have adapted from forest to grassland.

You can also "spot the pig" in a drawing of forests, pig buttons and twirl wheels to establish geographical distribution, and an hour flies by like magic. Worksheets are available and the exhibition is suitable for ages four to 90.

notes

CARIBBEAN FOCUS '86 Caribbean Focus '86 is still in full swing at the Commonwealth Institute, with special programmes for schools, seminars, courses and exhibitions. Details from Education Centre, Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8.

JUST FOR KIDS A four-day exhibition, "Just for Kids 1986" will open at the Scottish Exhibition Centre in Glasgow in May for children aged 2-12 and their parents.

Iola Smith

Science quest

Science is fun and accessible to everyone. That is the simple philosophy underlying *Techniques*, Wales' first interactive science exhibition which has just finished in Cardiff but will reopen in a permanent home early next year.

According to its director John Beeston, Professor of Science Education at University College Cardiff, *Techniques* is an entertaining approach to the serious purpose of changing our perception of science.

"Science and technology are not part of our culture like music or sport, and they are generally considered to be either difficult and frightening or boring," Professor Beeston explains.

"So they must be presented attractively if they are to give youngsters an incentive to explore the world around them."

That is the objective of the 40-plus exhibits already at *Techniques*. Three-quarters have been made especially for the centre by organizations as diverse as Gwent College of Higher Education and a Royal Ordnance factory, all part of the drive to involve an entire Welsh community in the enterprise.

Industry has proved particularly helpful, by providing gifts in kind to support *Techniques*' £83,000 Sainsbury Trust funding. For example, this first exhibition was staged in a recently-vacated showroom provided by

Wales Gas, and companies such as the Electricity Board and Harlech Television (HTV) donated exhibits. The former developed a magnetic split transformer to illustrate how transformers work, while HTV provided a small studio so that youngsters could experience television production at first hand. A few exhibits were borrowed, mainly from the Bristol Exploration and the Merseyside County Museum of Industrial Artefacts.

Some of *Techniques*'s perception tricks are pure entertainment. These include the flying pinprick illusion which gives the impression that a viewer is standing on air, and the flipping image where two children stand opposite each other but look as though one is upside down. A large impossible triangle also causes a stir when visitors walk through it.

Staffed by eight permanent workers

and about 50 University College Cardiff and UWIST students who work shifts as helpers, *Techniques* hopes to have a permanent site in South Wales by next Spring. Then it will be able to accommodate lectures, industrial displays and a workshop to produce more exhibits. It is also hoped to establish a young designers' club, where pupils will be able to collaborate with scientists and engineers to create scientific toys and games.

But the permanent site does not mean that *Techniques* will renounce its commitment to the rest of Wales. Future exhibitions are envisaged throughout the country.

Further information about *Techniques* is available from Professor John Beeston at University College Cardiff (tel: 0222 - 874000).

Basic competence

Mike Thorne on a City and Guilds information technology course for sixth formers

Month. City and Guilds launched its Basic Competence in Information Technology scheme. Intended for sixth formers, be they arts or science students, this school-assessed course is designed to give pupils the competence to discuss potential applications of requirements of computer systems. The idea is both timely and relevant.

Particularly laudible is the insistence that candidates carry out one of three practical exercises: creating a word-processed document; assessing and editing a database; or operating a spreadsheet package. Teachers evaluate assess pupils who are given three multiple-choice tests in the City and Guilds package. Pupils also have to work through a case study assignment in their chosen subject.

A wordprocessing assignment, for instance, consists of loading into a word processor system an existing document, editing a letter, and then editing the letter according to a realistic copy. Candidates must know how to reset left and right margins, how to turn justification on or off, how to insert paragraphs from a pre-existing document, and how to save assignments as first class.

Each of memory containing one instruction
Each of memory containing two instructions
Each of memory containing many instructions

Each of memory consists of RAM and ROM chips
Each of words which move between units
Each of the form of binary digits
Each of the computer user interface

All the more pity that City and Guilds didn't just decide to make pupils do all of them and forget the theoretical part of the syllabus.

To be fair, the syllabus itself does avoid a lot of pitfalls, but it is possible to serve industrial consultancy customers for years without knowing what a "handprint terminal" is, and it is hard to believe that, in order to judge potential applications, you really need to know that "the four levels of programming languages" are "machine code, assembly language, high level language" and "authoring language" - even if the statement were true.

But over-simplifications like this are rare; the objectives concerning printers and communications are particularly pertinent and up to date. The section on programming languages is too detailed to meet their intended aims and it illustrates the mainframe data-processing background of those who devised the scheme. This candidate is to know that BASIC is "a beginners' language", PASCAL is for "training in structured programming", and PROLOG is for "information retrieval". The latter is especially surprising as there are few enough real-world applications of Prolog anyway.

A keyboard is ONLY used to
a input data
b output data
c control input devices
d control output devices

Which one of the following BEST describes a peripheral unit?
a a unit which enables a computer to manipulate data
b a unit which includes a control processor
c a device connected to and controlled by a computer

and many of them are in robotics, process control and CAD/CAM: I know of none in the information retrieval area.

In context, these are minor moans about a venture which is most welcome. However, several of us in a university department of computer science failed the written competency test by getting more than 15 multiple-choice questions wrong, and one of those was an A-level computer science senior examiner.

Perhaps the questions from the pilot issue of the scheme have by now been rewritten, but we would still like to know the answers to the questions we couldn't do (see below). These are either downright wrong, have two or more answers or are misleadingly or ambiguously phrased.

When these details have been sorted out, City and Guilds will have a scheme which should be adopted by every secondary school in the UK. The fee per candidate is £5 and candidates must be registered before taking any part of the assessment exercises.

Further information from Section 18, City and Guilds London Institute, 46 Britannia Street, London WC1N 8RG.

The editing of text content may involve
a page length
b overwriting
c line spacing
d justification

The "internal memory unit" is for storing programs and data that is to be processed
Each of memory consists of RAM and ROM chips
Each of words which move between units
Each of the form of binary digits
Each of the computer user interface

MEDIA

Swashbucklers

Hugh David on a tale of plunder and love

Monday, 4.00pm.

These swashbucklers shouldn't be taken too seriously. They are not the first of their kind, and they are not the last.

But they are the ideal world of *Listen to the Bells* and all the independent programmes live in the real world of the BBC and parents recognize that the room when James Bond is never seen again on screen.

So, to the Pirates is occasioned by "naughty" as *The Benny Hill* and there are one or two other swashbucklers which rise to the occasion of what passes for dialogue in "Pirates" films. On the

other hand, there is hardly so much as a "bloody" in the script, and to carp about the few heavy blows or putting lips is the equivalent of criticizing a present because of the box in which it arrives. A much more pertinent grouse would be that the film assumes too much, since it takes it as axiomatic that its family audience will be familiar with the style and conventions of *The Sea Hawk*, say, and black-and-white swashbucklers like *The Mark of Zorro* (coincidentally hidden in BBC2's daytime schedules only last Monday).

For, although based on George MacDonald Fraser's novel, Sunday's 90-minute spectacular is essentially an affectionate, knowing pastiche of the buccaneering movies of the Thirties and Forties. The convoluted plot defies summary; suffice it to say that it concerns Capt Ben Avery, RN and

justing jaw, and his attempts to convey the priceless Madagascarian Crown through pirate-infested oceans to British shores. There is plunder and seduction; bravery, treachery and enduring love. Through the sophistication of the BBC's tele-technology, there are also sequences with such spectacle it is almost impossible to believe that the whole shebang was done for less than £250,000. Made on film for cinema release it would have cost more like £10m.

There are also some distinctly above-average one-liners in the script, and plenty of visual gags which pass without mention. The scenes in taverns with names like *The Foundered Squid* are good but particularly funny is the moment when a yo-ho-ho winks at the bluntness and cries: "Let's get this ship on the road".



Coming out

Gabrielle Jones on 'The Trouble with Sex'

The Trouble with Sex BBC2, Wednesdays 10.20pm.

It was Mrs Patrick Campbell who famously remarked "I don't care what they do as long as they don't frighten the horses". She was referring to homosexuals, but it seems to me a good rule of thumb, generally applied to sex.

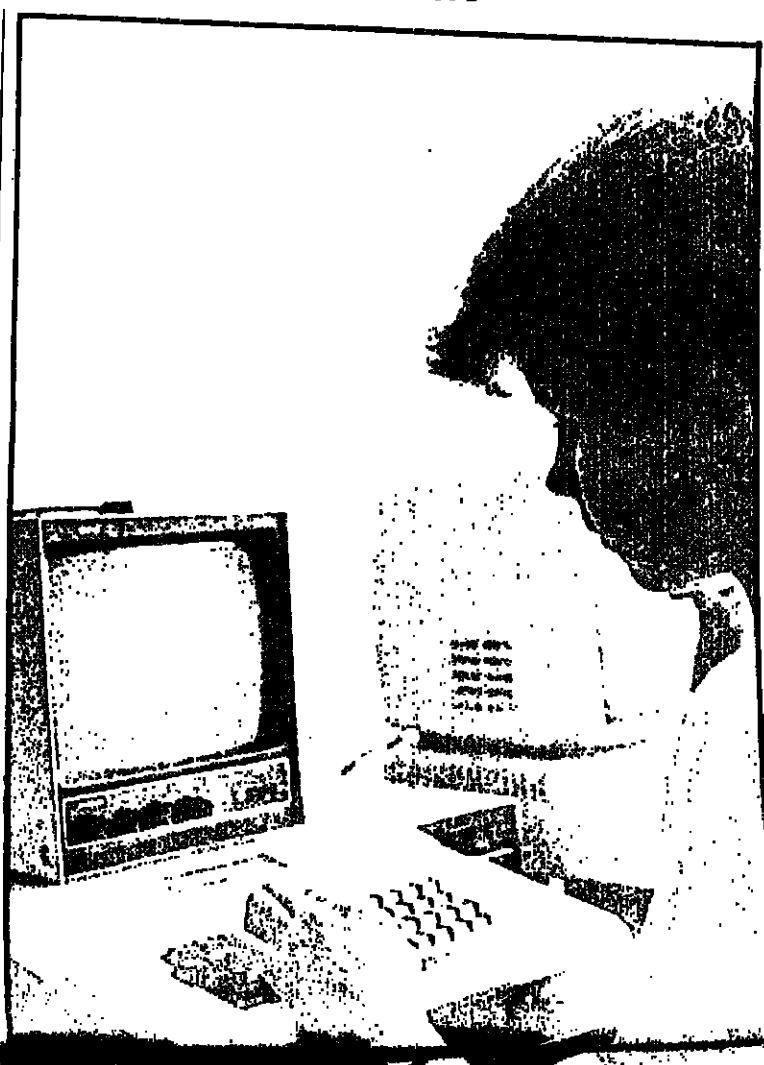
Horses notoriously dislike violence and enjoy affectionate contact. However, in our society, barely recovering from an extreme dose of Victorian prudishness before cowering under the shock of AIDS, and in the interim (more doubtfully) damaging itself with an excess of "anything for kicks", things are not so simple. If you deviate from the norm you gotta feel bad, and even if you are "normal", "naughty but nice" is the social mode of sexual contact. Black lace knickers, rubber artefacts, titillating photos: it all adds up to what D H Lawrence called "the dirty little secret". This is not to deny that the great majority have a satisfactory sex life, only that "lineaments of gratified desire", to use Blake's term, are far less widely touted than the Big Tease.

BBC2's latest contribution to the discussion of sex in the media was on the worthy side. Earlier programmes on AIDS and contraception were full of responsible discussion. The fifth programme, on "Coming Out", followed a gay teacher into a sober realization of his sexual preference. So downbeat was the tone, particularly in his "confession" to a rubicund psychiatrist, that we might have been listening to a chat about impotence or imminent death. A high note of farce was reached in his visit to a social night organized by this advice-figure. Mourful, hand-shakes, lugubrious mugs of tea, dejected silences. As "someone" to give him permission to move on, the psychiatrist didn't seem a lot of help.

Gayness (an inappropriate word in these circumstances) and the man's employment as a teacher were not specifically related. The last programme did go into schools and look at methods of sex education. The tone was much lighter and the advice, most of it tactfully given within the context of role-play tutor groups, seemed more appropriate. Perhaps this was because libido is so high within the teenage group and the issues so immediate that they cannot help but be honest. As one remarked, "you didn't find out anything about the sexual side of things, only relationships", though this had to be contrasted with older people complaining about lessons on the rabbit, from which they had been expected to draw useful conclusions.

Anne Hooper, a sex education adviser, remarked tartly that "sex education doesn't fit into the concept of education generally, which is passing exams". Still, although prudence has to be eschewed, both to avoid embarrassment and to placate parents/viewers, I should have found it more satisfactory if the practice in schools could have bowed a little more to common sense, since as the FPA's director of education voiced it, "Everyone knows that young people experiment sexually anyway." Our knowledge of sexuality is supposed to be separate from our own sexual behaviour. As Anne Hooper says, "the main trouble with sex is we still can't talk about it".

Failing to address the anti-sex education lobby directly, the programme was unable to address the question of whether sex education can take place in the classroom or whether most people's introduction to the facts of life will remain urgent whispers in the school toilets, since parents cannot bear that their children think of them as sexual beings. That will never frighten the horses, but it scares the living daylight out of us.



Dirty Den and Page Three—Inside Chapter

Herbert Williams visits the Media Education Centre at Cardiff

Media Studies is one of those subjects that excite a certain amount of scepticism, not least from those who question whether it can be taught with the necessary degree of objectivity.

After all, the argument goes, if we are inviting the young to question the values implicit in a newspaper or television programme, what alternative set of values should they have in mind? Here, inevitably, the teacher's own prejudices must play a part, leaving the door open to a kind of propaganda every bit as pervasive as that of the newspaper proprietor.

Such ethical dilemmas have not prevented the launching in Cardiff of a resource centre which is boldly proclaimed to be a "unique and pioneering venture". Its special virtue resting in its involvement with the enterprising Chapter Arts Centre.

The Chapter Media Education Centre aims to provide both practical and theoretical help to teachers and pupils in the study of a subject which is making a steady advance into the curriculum, even in areas where, a few years ago, it was greeted at best with a steady-eyed caution.

It is housed just round the corner from the Arts Centre itself, in a building which over the years has appeared to suffer from a crisis of identity. It has been, variously, a Sunday school, library and Scout hall, an experience of life which perhaps gives it the right aura for the study of such assorted chronicles of human endeavour as the *Sun*, the *Guardian* and *News at Ten*.

Those stepping inside the MEC, an abbreviation which in some minds is too much like the MSC for comfort,



find a range of equipment which would dazzle those who, not so long ago, felt themselves lucky to have a battered radio and faltering TV on the campus: film cameras, animation equipment, a photographic darkroom and, naturally, VHS video production equipment complete with editing suite. There is a photographic and video library apart from the more conventional library of books and periodicals, as well as teaching packs, some of which have been designed specifically around the WJEC 16-plus Media Studies syllabus.

On the day the centre was officially opened, the Lord Mayor of Cardiff looked in and was then whisked away by his chauffeur before the screening of an MEC video showing how children in three South Wales schools react to Dirty Den, Page Three and press treatment of Princess Di's hairstyle. The video was entertaining, moderately informative and technically accomplished. As an introduction to the work of MEC, it will do.

The centre will be running courses for teachers—a full day's in-service training for Media Studies teachers in

Mid-Glamorgan closely followed the official launch—and staging seminars, conferences and live presentations. Speakers will include film makers, journalists, radio presenters and TV producers.

Both teachers and pupils will be made more familiar with the work of the Chapter Arts Centre, which has film, video, photographic and print workshops, as well as galleries and cinemas. The director of Chapter, Neil Wallace, makes the point that it's the third largest independent arts centre in

Britain, and that even where other media education centres exist, teachers rarely have access to such expertise.

The MEC is funded for a three-year pilot period by a variety of bodies, including the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the British Film Institute, the Welsh Office and the Welsh Arts Council. Mid-Glamorgan and South Glamorgan L.E.A.s are each providing an initial £4,000, which together adds up to around 15 per cent of the required first-year total.

It is, perhaps, no surprise that this project has surfaced in Wales, as some pioneering work in Clywd 10 years ago persuaded many schools in the Principality to accept Media Studies as a subject for the curriculum. This year about 500 WJEC candidates took some kind of examination in the subject—CSE, O level or Common Syllabus—and the numbers are expected to increase in the run-up to CSE. It is not possible, yet, to take an A level in Media Studies; a WJEC spokesman said this was "still subject to discussion".

The subject, which is cross-curricular, takes in such tricky matters as gender representation, stereotyping of various kinds, the study of institutions and the concept of newspapers have of their readers. Neil Wallace promises that at the centre, which has four full-time staff, they will not lose sight of the fact that people in the media often work under intense pressure: "We are not trying to blow the whistle on it all, but simply hoping to persuade children to look at what they read, see and hear in a more critical way."

Quacks

VIDEO
Imprinting in Ducklings
VHS, £29.50 + VAT (20 mins)
Educational Media International, 25
Boileau Road, London, W5 3AL.

Imprinting is a fascinating phenomenon. Starting with a flock of ducks, this film focusses on a mother and her brood of ducklings, then

followed by ducklings. A series of investigations probes the nature of this imprinting of the ducklings on the mother. Ducklings from isolated eggs that have been incubated separately are tested with toys which move and make a noise, such as a dog or a model fire engine. When first released the solitary duckling begins a shrill chirping. Time lapse cinematography shows how it then follows the toy around, its shrill chirping being replaced by more subdued sounds. But a toy is not essential; the duckling will follow a moving red balloon. Other

investigations show that 16-hour-old birds show an optimum imprinting response, a 30-hour-old duckling does not become imprinted, and the film discusses the value of imprinting for the survival of animals in the wild. The material in this programme has been effectively shot and the commentary is at the right level for schools. It is a pity that details are not given of the range of organisms in which imprinting occurs. This could have been related to wider aspects of the birds' behaviour and to the possible evolutionary mechanisms of imprinting.

John A Barker

The Big C

VIDEO
Captain Bill Sails the "C"
VHS, £75 + VAT (10 mins)
Educational Media International, 25
Boileau Road, London, W5 3AL.

This is an animated film on the sensitive topic of cancer. Captain Bill has a wooden leg and to find out why, we

follow his boat in to the "inner space cells" of a leg. Inside a cell nucleus, the structure of DNA is very simply explained in terms of nucleotides. Replication is shown, using cartoon "unwinding enzymes"; then the cell divides to form two normal cells. Captain Bill introduces the three classes of "alien agents"—radioactivity, chemicals and viruses—and their effect on the normal process of the cell cycle is vividly shown, with uncontrolled cell division producing a cancerous growth. The major types of cancer are listed,

and the affected parts shown. Then three methods of treatment, surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, are demonstrated with considerable visual impact. Captain Bill had to have his leg removed to control the cancer. This film succeeds in showing the fundamental nature of cell division and how the process can be damaged by external agents. The sequence illustrating the various types of cancer would have benefited from notes, but overall the quality of the animation and sound is very high indeed.

J A B

School exhibitions can prove an ideal way to promote interest in an area of the curriculum, and they can assist in bringing industry in to the school. Last term's exhibition on Cinema History at Broomfield School in Southgate consisted of a large collection of Russian and American posters, technical data on sound, lighting and special effects, and numerous items of film equipment, including a 28mm 8mm projector once owned by Captain Scott.



Birdwatch

RSPB Project Guides
Bird Studies: Using School Grounds
(32 pages); Hedges (32 pages); The Uplands (18 pages)
All priced at 35p including postage
Royal Society for the Protection of
Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

These titles are a selection of a much larger range of project guides, but they have a fresher, more lively approach than some. The guides are presented in a very attractive, highly visual and often humorous style. Teachers are urged to copy, cut up and rearrange the sheets, mask text on certain pages, construct worksheets and generally adapt the materials to suit their own styles and teaching situations. They are all excellent value.

Bird Studies will be of most use to the widest range of teachers. Packed with sensible ideas and advice, it includes sections on observing birds from the classroom, attracting them close to the school building or into the school grounds by setting up bird tables and nest boxes, and building a pond or setting up an environmental study area. A lot of the practical work suggestions can be adapted for children in primary or lower secondary schools and some could form the basis of experimental work in GCSE biology courses. Details of the Young Ornitho-

logists' Club and a selected resource list are also included. This is essential material for anyone wishing to use the immediate environment around the school for exciting wildlife studies.

Hedges will be more appropriate for schools in less urban areas, but nevertheless provides valuable material for "townies" on a school excursion or field trip. The emphasis is on work for primary/lower secondary students, and on all aspects of wildlife in hedgerows. The historical elements of a study of hedges are well covered, as is the method of dating a hedge from the number of trees and bushes present. The value and disadvantages of hedges, and the plant life, midbeasts and mammals as well as all given good. Throughout each section suggestions are given for practical activities with work on a hedgerow "calendar" and game at the end of the guide.

Uplands is a more remote topic for study, and the environment is particularly inhospitable for practical work. The guide has a particularly high quality of production and presents teachers with a wealth of information and how they are to survive the inclement conditions throughout the year, it suggests activities to support work on the topic.

John Tranter

New slant on discourse

From its birth in a university science lab preparing audio-visual materials for first-year Zoology courses, Discourse Interactive has developed into a self-financing university company, which sells high-technology expertise to clients as diverse as the Sports Council and the Greater Manchester Police Force.

Founded by zoologist Dr Roger Hammond, and Keith Reach of the university's Educational Technology Centre at University College Cardiff, it produces interactive video training packages using a combination of video disc and microcomputer technology. During the next 32 months they expect a turnover of £300,000, an increase in

permanent staff and new premises to accommodate expansion.

The first university-based commercial videodisc company, Discourse Interactive not only provides the controlling computer software, it also films the video. Produced to television picture quality, the video is either created at the university's studio or one of the numerous independent production companies which have sprung up since the advent of SAC, the fourth television channel in Wales. Training packages already produced include an introduction to the computerized library for University College Cardiff's own library staff for Central London Polytechnic, nurse education schemes filmed at Cardiff hospital for first-year student nurses, and coaching packages for the Sports Council.

Iola Smith

Classified Advertisements

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CHRISTMAS USA

In the beginning there was segregation. But in 1954, the US Supreme Court said to the schools of America: "Go thou and integrate, for separate thou may be but equal thou art not. And Martin Luther, whose name is King, has shown us the error of your ways. Henceforth, let no child be divided from another by reason of his race."

In the land to the south, which is called Alabama, was much burning of crosses and gnashing of teeth. But the lesser courts took up the sword and ordained that children should be carried on the bus, one to the school of another, so that black and white should study together. And they called it integration.

Yet were the people sore perplexed. "Why should our children be treated so?" they asked. "They have the sickness called travel, and still they are educated not." And so the blacks among them retreated to the ghettos, and the whites departed for suburbia where lived their kin. And once again there were black schools and there were white schools. And they called it "white flight".

Now it came to pass that certain wise men looked upon this scene and said, "There must be a better way. If the stick of bussing worketh not, let us try the carrot of achievement. Let us make schools in the districts that are black more equal than the others. Then will the whites return, rejoicing." And they laboured mightily and spent much of the taxpayers' money, and lo, they created excellence and elitism where before had been much mediocrity. And they called them Magnet schools.

Therein were courses which American high schools never teach: lessons in mathematics at undreamed-of levels - studies in computers and all manner of esoteric things. International studies, Greek and Roman history, chemistry and physics, law and public service. And the science that is called environmental. Even, it was rumoured, second languages. And each school



Reaping the whirlwind

Bill Norris recounts the parable of the Magnet school . . .

how it repelled before it became attractive

had its individual theme, attracting those who sought such knowledge like bees to nectar.

Still were the people not pleased, for in the year 1970 when the Magnet schools began, "elitism" was a word of the devil and the cry was for "equality".

"Thou has taken our brightest and best," they cried. "Thou has made an altar to the talents of the high achiever and let the rest go hang. What is to become of our other children - they who cannot gain admission to the schools called Magnet?"

"Art thou following the words of the admiral called Rickover? He who said, 'Teach the best and shoot the rest?'"

For truly it is said, argued the unbelievers, that if thou createst a school and nameth it first class, then

all the others must be in the second rank and below. In the name of integration and the holy racial quota in the classroom, thou has condemned all other children to a status of inferiority. Those schools which are not "Magnets" will be like unto the "secondary moderns" in that kingdom which was once called united. And that prospect appalleth.

Among the teachers of the young, opinion was like divided. For they coveted jobs in the Magnet schools, and many came from far corners of the land to seek posts, and many were turned away. They rent their garments of scholarly cloth and cried: "Are we to be thought inferior?" And it was true, and they liked it not.

And so it came to pass that for one decade, the growth of the Magnet school in America was slow beyond

understanding. Then spake the high priest of the department of education, whose name was Terrel Bell. "Take heed," he said, "for your nation is at risk." For he had looked at the schools across America and was sore distressed at what he found. And Terrel Bell began William Bennett and William Bennett began reports without number, and the reports began a new buzz-word. And the name of that buzz-word was "excellence".

The people were mightily impressed. "Give us excellence," they cried. "Give us equity before equality and let our children be taught to strive." And they looked again towards the Magnet schools, and now they found them good.

"Give us these schools," they said, "that our children may at last be taught in the ways of the modern

world, and may compete with enemy that is Japanese. For the sake of the federal deficit. Amen."

But the states and the city officials said in their wisdom: "Knowest thou that new schools are expensive and the tax dollar shrinketh? Honour thy wishes will mean new taxes, yea, unto the next generation." And the taxpayers said: "So be it. We will pay." And everyone was sore amazed.

And so it came about that Magnet schools were created throughout the land, in those places where blacks were many and the people were tired of mediocrity, until they totalled a number beyond the counting of the education department. And the whites abandoned private suburban schools in droves and clamoured at the gates of admission.

Yet many were denied, especially in the city of Minneapolis, which called St Paul, for the court decreed in the name of integration that half the pupils should be black.

The white parents were in a rage. How is it, they demanded, that quality education should be denied to our children and given to those of another race? How could such a thing happen?

Well . . . In the beginning it was segregation . . .

NEXT WEEK

Review of the year

News quiz

And a happy new year?

Ted Wrang looks into a cloudy crystal ball

Full frontal

Should the school curriculum be cut explicitly the rest of life to be preparing pupils for?

Print out of film

Leon Garfield on the recreation of The December Rose in book form

Chinese checkers

Primary maths teaching in China

Extra: Science

Christmas Crossword by Rufus

ACROSS

- 1 It may be tied up for the present (6)
- 4 Chop up a bird that's cooked and eaten at Christmas (5)
- 9 Sick around for a drink, perhaps (3)
- 11 A capital decoration at party time (5-3)
- 15 A nut go into this sweet? Yes (6)
- 19 She comes with the holly, perhaps (3)
- 20 Back to Nazareth for a while (3)
- 21 They're just nominal attachments for the present (6)
- 22 It's suspended just before Christmas (8)
- 23 Whisky helps to make Christmas a merry experience! (3)
- 24 A fool mounds about festive occasions (8)
- 25 Stocking filler in a Royal House (6)
- 28 They are charged for portions without wine (4)
- 29 One authorized by another to look around a neat stableman of Jesus (5)
- 30 Stop and have a drink (6)
- 32 Christian celebration when a tree's set out (6)
- 34 A girl whisks egg-white for 46 across (3)
- 35 Want one turkey bone? (4)
- 40 Welcome Jack, perhaps, received at Christmas (8, 4)
- 42 The last of the wine (4)
- 44 Leon's back for Christmas (4)
- 46 Making a topping sweet for Christmas (5, 3, 4)
- 50 Seasonal song that featured 51 across (1, 9, 5)
- 51 Sober geometer once before his reformation on Christmas Eve (8, 7)
- 52 Partly wrap Edna's present before it's taken off (4)
- 53 Leaf about to study religious pictures (5)
- 54 Freeze that lasted a long time (3, 3)
- 56 Open the brandy with the game and get drunk (6)
- 58 Pick off the bird (5)
- 59 How a party-giver makes an inviting suggestion? (4)
- 64 Using two joints on a Sunday? (8)
- 66 A convivial salutation (7)
- 67 Noel's blazer (4-3)
- 68 Took part with spirit on an instrument (4)
- 70 Come to a similar conclusion in a carol, perhaps (5)
- 71 Noel's tower of strength? (8)
- 72 Fire escape used by Santa Claus? (7)
- 73 Egyptian god and goddess seen around the first Nowell with the Christmas cake ingredients (7)
- 74 Useful for cracking the surface before a dip at breakfast time (3, 5)

DOWN

- 1 Making the party go with a bang? (7, 1, 7)
- 2 Dressed in the Christmas bird? (5)
- 3 Measures taken to finish off the Christmas bells (4)
- 5 Exhilarating - as the Christmas spirit may be (12)
- 6 Put up a 2 down perhaps (4)
- 7 Charming noblemen of pantomime (8)
- 9 Well-known skating figure (5)
- 9 An original Christmas gift (5)
- 10 They should be fat by now! (5)
- 11 Leaves with uncle (5)
- 12 Warming drink for a group of party officers (6)
- 13 It's true Christmas Fire always includes it (4)
- 14 "The Good Old Days", for which we will take a cup in singing (4, 4, 4)
- 16 He plays a big part in children's pantomimes (4)
- 17 Bottled spirits (5)
- 18 Trio with stable bearings (3, 5, 4, 3)
- 20 Open anger - by gum! (12)
- 22 Making a tidy packet before Christmas (4-8)
- 31 Used for pointing - but not the Christmas tree (3)
- 33 A party activity (8)
- 36 Feeling irritable? (5)
- 37 Give patient attention to the children's pantomime visit (5)
- 38 Ideal group to play an eightsome (5)
- 39 He took a certain measure - to try and stop Christmas (5)
- 41 Stimulate with an uplifting Eastern story (5)
- 43 Stray among the holly berries (3)
- 45 The first mate comes before Christmas Day (3)
- 47 Regions in the Near East (5)
- 48 Not a hot favourite of children at parties (3-5)
- 49 Swapping presents - the impudence! (8)
- 55 Carol said it shone around (5)
- 57 A better type of cake (5)
- 60 Runners carry it along (4)
- 61 Some rush ahead to see a Middle Eastern King (4)
- 62 Scattered snow about (4)
- 63 Does one's hair for parties? (4)
- 65 A priest that is found about fifty (3)
- 69 The end of 66 across in Brazil (3)

Solution to puzzle 285

